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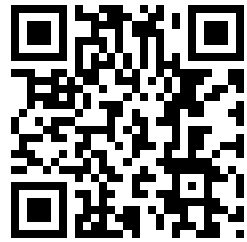

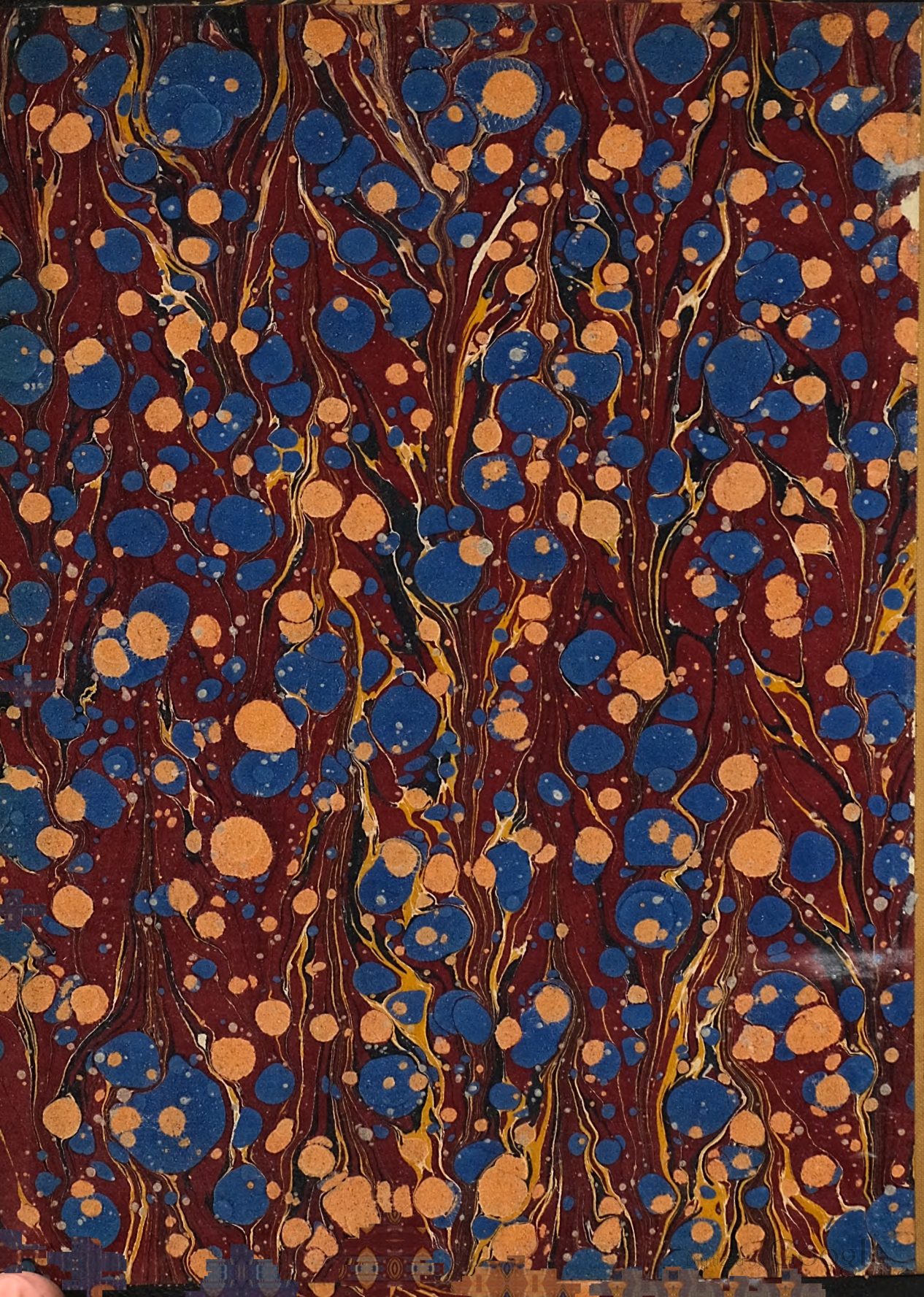

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WARNING. *Instead of using the common White Headache Powders, which generally consist entirely of a crude drug, which has been condemned as dangerous by the medical papers, insist on having a bona-fide anti-quack remedy, recommended by such eminent medical authorities as Dr. RAMAGE, L.R.C.P., Dr. THURSTIN, L.R.C.P., late Dr. BOYD-WILLIAMS (Liverpool), the Editor of the Medical Journal, "Health," etc., etc. The name of this safe remedy is KAPUTINE.*

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"Then I discovered the preparation which is now placed upon the market. **I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders. Look at my hair now, isn't that convincing evidence of the value of my preparation.**

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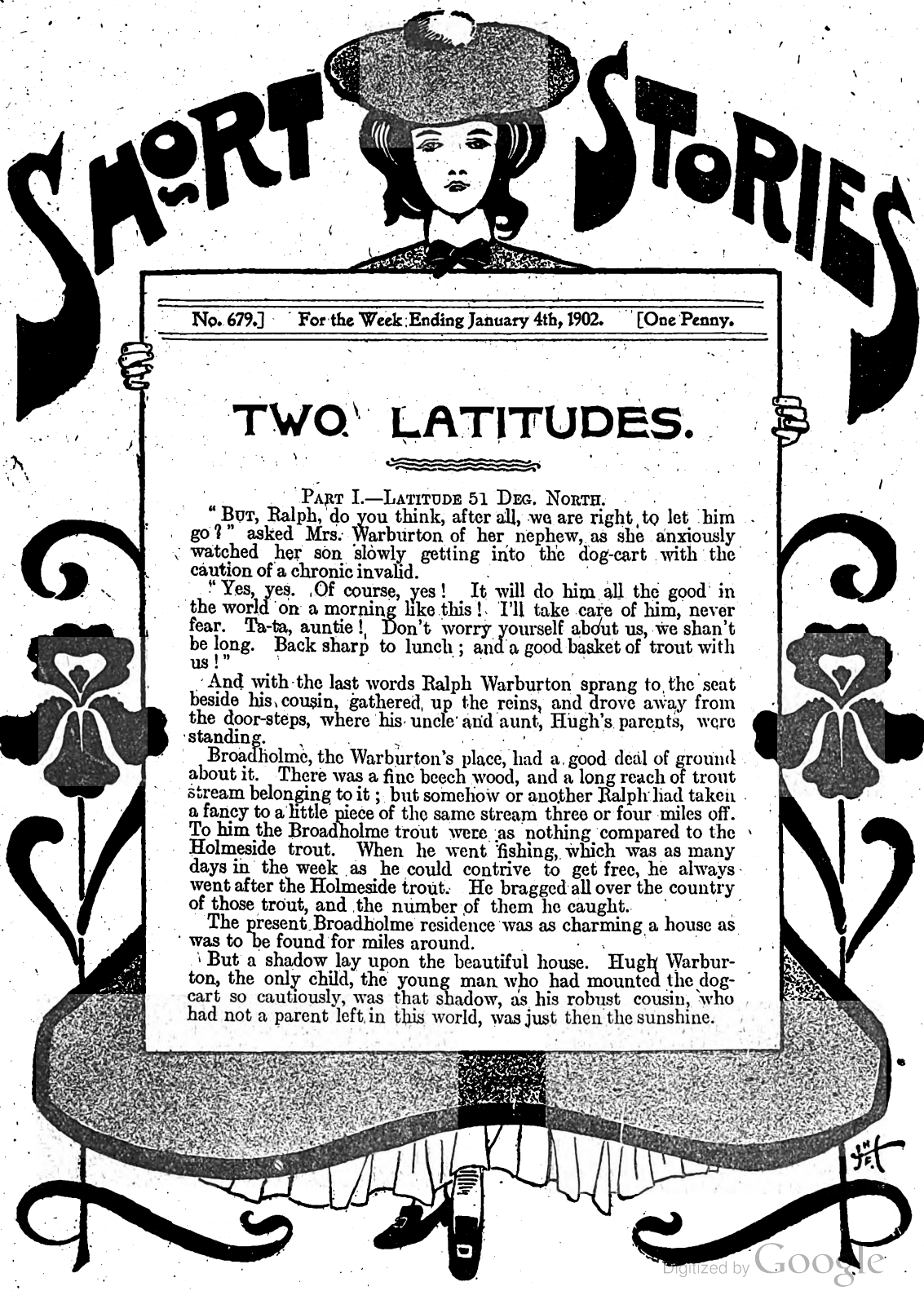

No. 679.] For the Week Ending January 4th, 1902. [One Penny.

TWO LATITUDES.

PART I.—LATITUDE 51 DEG. NORTH.

"BUT, Ralph, do you think, after all, we are right to let him go?" asked Mrs. Warburton of her nephew, as she anxiously watched her son slowly getting into the dog-cart with the caution of a chronic invalid.

"Yes, yes. Of course, yes! It will do him all the good in the world on a morning like this! I'll take care of him, never fear. Ta-ta, auntie! Don't worry yourself about us, we shan't be long. Back sharp to lunch; and a good basket of trout with us!"

And with the last words Ralph Warburton sprang to the seat beside his cousin, gathered up the reins, and drove away from the door-steps, where his uncle and aunt, Hugh's parents, were standing.

Broadholme, the Warburton's place, had a good deal of ground about it. There was a fine beech wood, and a long reach of trout stream belonging to it; but somehow or another Ralph had taken a fancy to a little piece of the same stream three or four miles off. To him the Broadholme trout were as nothing compared to the Holmeside trout. When he went fishing, which was as many days in the week as he could contrive to get free, he always went after the Holmeside trout. He bragged all over the country of those trout, and the number of them he caught.

The present Broadholme residence was as charming a house as was to be found for miles around.

But a shadow lay upon the beautiful house. Hugh Warburton, the only child, the young man who had mounted the dog-cart so cautiously, was that shadow, as his robust cousin, who had not a parent left in this world, was just then the sunshine.

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Mr. and Mrs. Warburton stood watching the trap as it rapidly passed through the long drive.

"Have we done right?" asked the mother. "Isn't there a touch of east still in the wind? Is his coat thick enough?"

"O, my dear, Ralph will take care of him. Do him good! Glad Ralph managed to get him out. Fine fellow, Ralph!" said the father, with a heartiness of speech he did not feel; for inwardly he was frightfully jealous of his nephew's health and strength. It seemed to him a wrong both to himself and his son. Why should Ralph be so well when Hugh—

The parents each knew what the other was feeling. With a heavy sigh they turned away, the one to her morning room, the other to his stables. It was sad how each had avoided looking at the other.

As for the two young men, they were soon bowling along the high road in fine style.

The roads were dry and dusty; damp, cold, and winter seemed to have fled away for ever. The light air was half-intoxicating. They left the trap in the village. Murray, the man, put it up at the Greyhound. They turned down by a little rustic bridge, and walked by the side of the Lutterbourn until

"O, here we are?" cried Ralph. "Here's the very sunniest nook on the whole stream. Blest if that bit of wall isn't quite hot!"

"Too much sun for fishing. You'll never get a bite in such water as that," said Hugh. "However, I'll have a cast and try, just for the fun of the thing."

"The water here always suits me, that's the beauty of it," said Ralph laughing. "Now, have you got all you want? All right then. *I fish over that wall.*"

"What, among the apple blossom?" asked Hugh, looking up into his cousin's face, with his two luminous eyes, which always seemed unnaturally large, suddenly spreading as it were all over his face.

Ralph laughed, the colour rose up to the roots of his hair; he turned away whistling—he had a very true and musical whistle—a well-known air from "Patience": "Prithee, pretty maiden," etc., and he walked straight up to the wall, leant both his arms on the top of it, and looked about among the lichen-covered stems of the old apple trees in the orchard.

Now if Ralph Warburton meant the words "pretty maiden" to describe that object of his dreams who was at that very moment advancing towards him under a shower of fluttering pink blossoms a light breeze had displaced, no term could well be less appropriate.

Helen Beresford, of Holmeside, was not merely "pretty maiden," with flaxen hair and speed-well eyes, and a waist like a wasp's, she was "a daughter of the gods, divinely tall," and, in fact, she was exactly the same height as Ralph, and he was not short for a man.

She came to meet him with free, glad steps, and a something of almost childlike tenderness in her blushing face and tremulous mouth.

They shook hands over the orchard wall—that is to say, they did not *shake* hands, because she put out her hand, which was soft and round, but distinctly powerful, and he held it in both of his, while he said a good many things that need not be put down.

"Why, that is your cousin?" said she presently.

"Yes. It was so fine—he wanted so much to come out, poor fellow! So I brought him down here to fish—else, you know, I could hardly have come myself, and until to-morrow would have been such an awful time."

"Poor fellow! He looks happy, though!" said Helen, with her voice full of pity. She had the tenderest heart in all the world.

"Come out and speak to him," said Ralph; and by way of making her come out, he put both his hands on the low wall and vaulted over into the orchard.

"It's absurd to go out just yet, though," said he, and taking her arm as if he had a right both to it and her, they walked up and down among the apple trees for a few minutes in silence.

"Helen," he said presently, very seriously, "do we understand each other?"

"I suppose so," she answered softly, and instantly began to tremble all over.

"Then it's only the question of the confounded tin," he went on.

"I suppose so," she repeated still more softly and nervously.

"Then we'd better tell granny? Yes, and Hugh?" he suggested.

"I suppose we'd better; or, perhaps, we'd better wait until—until we can see our way clearer."

"This uncertainty is horrible," began Ralph.

"It is very trying," she murmured; "still, we must be brave."

"You're always brave, bless you!"

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are; I wish I'd half your pluck."

"That wouldn't be much."

"But you can't think how repulsive it is to me—to—to—"

"To be poor? Oh, there are worse things than that!"

"No, no, it isn't that; it's—it's the horrible knowledge that when that poor fellow goes—and he must go—I shall be my uncle's heir, and—well, then, of course, everything will be different. You can't think how dreadful it is to me to see him about. I often feel I can't stand it—I must go. If it hadn't been for you I should have gone. But he's so fond of me; he can't bear any one else about him. And I'm fond of him too. I never had a brother, so I can't say what it feels like to have one, but I couldn't be fonder of a brother; and—but there, it's horrible to me—it really is! And I've been such an unlucky beggar too!"

"Well, the luck will turn now; it can't go on for ever, you know."

"I'm an ungrateful brute for saying so, as it's won me you, Helen."

Here fortunately there was another shower of apple blossom, which shall be allowed to screen them for a few seconds.

"At any rate, up to my time of knowing you, I was always such an unlucky beggar," resumed Ralph. "My uncle's been good to me, as uncles go—very different from a father and that sort of thing. When I was plucked for the Civil Service, I thought I'd like to learn tea."

"Learn tea?" asked Helen.

"Yes, I was going out to Assam; then I came down here for a few days to recruit—tea was such a frightful grind, and I found poor Hugh awfully bad, and he made no end of a fuss when I wanted to leave. My aunt and uncle were half out of their minds about him. 'What's all the tea in the world compared to poor Hugh's comfort? If he wants you to stay, you must stay,' they said; so I hung on here. But of course it's the very thing I ought not to have done; though I don't know how it is, it's only just lately that anything has seemed to matter much. I'm afraid you'll find me—"

"No, I shan't," said Helen. "Ah, there's granny out on the lawn!"

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"Shall we?" asked Ralph, slightly raising his eyebrows.

"Perhaps we'd better," she faltered.

So they both went off and told granny, who, strange to say, was not in the least surprised to hear it.

"Well, to punish you for your wickedness, I shall keep you prisoner in my castle of Holmeside until after lunch," said granny.

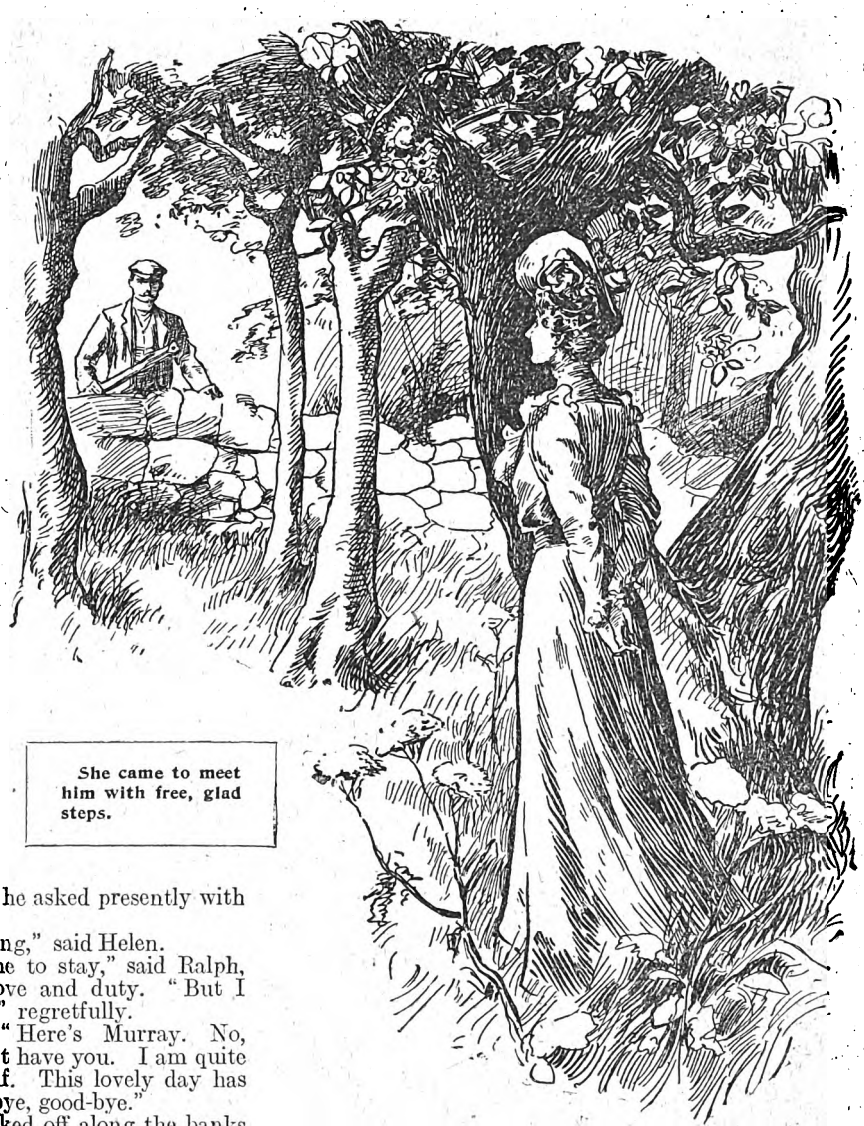
"Oh, but I've promised to be back sharp to lunch, and the others will be frantic if we're late. Good Heavens!" looking at his watch, "we shall hardly do it as it is Come, Helen, come. Good-bye, Mrs. Beresford."

And the engaged couple hurried off. Just as they turned out of the orchard gate they saw Hugh coming towards them.

Ralph left Helen's side for a moment and said:

"Hugh, old fellow, I'm the happiest man in the world! We've settled it all, haven't we, Helen? And she says she approves of you as a cousin."

"Very good of her! I am sure I return the compliment a thousand-fold," said Hugh; but he could not get through the sentence without a cough.



She came to meet him with free, glad steps.

"Isn't it time to be going?" he asked presently with another cough.

"Do come in and have something," said Helen.

"Mrs. Beresford has asked me to stay," said Ralph, beginning to waver between love and duty. "But I don't see how we can manage it!" regretfully.

"Why not?" said Hugh. "Here's Murray. No, Ralph, you shan't come; I won't have you. I am quite capable of taking care of myself. This lovely day has done me no end of good. Good-bye, good-bye."

And he turned away and walked off along the banks almost as briskly as if nothing were the matter with him.

They looked after him for a moment, then went towards the house arm in arm, talking happily.

Two hours of happiness; two hours of a present, so perfect, so exquisitely blissful, that it seemed to have neither past nor future. They stand alone, do those two hours, in the memory of a man and woman—unique, impossible to repeat; the beginning of their affianced life, the end,

Holmeside, old Mrs. Beresford's cottage, was a very small and modest residence, but it made up in charm, so far as Ralph Warburton was concerned, what it lost in size: to him it was altogether perfect. The tiny drawing-room was half bow-window, all twined about with dark-stemmed jasmine and the tender young leaves of a climbing rose.

He and she sat in that bow-window very close together, and talked in whispers after lunch when granny had gone to take her nap. But they did not say very much; their great happiness had made them quieter.

In a long pause between their broken talk, the sound of a horse's hoofs in rapid motion reached them; it came nearer very swiftly; it arrested Ralph's ear. He turned sharply to the window; in another instant "Golightly," the fastest horse in the Broadholme stables, was in sight. Murray was on him; they were tearing along the road at the very top of the thoroughbred's speed.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Ralph, and dashed out of the room and through the shrubbery.

Murray pulled up short in front of the gate.

"What's amiss?" shouted Ralph, the man's face striking him with cold terror.

"Bad news, sir; bad news!" exclaimed Murray, shaking his head.

"Be quick! What's wrong?" cried Ralph.

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"Mr. Hugh's just about killed himself!" said Murray. "He would drive that great pulling brute; all I could say wouldn't stop him. You shouldn't have left, Mr. Ralph; he wouldn't mind me. But he's done for himself—broken a blood vessel the minute he put foot in the house. Best get back, sir, quick as you can, if you want to see him again. We've been tearing about for doctors. I've just been to the post-office with a telegram to a London physician; but I knew where you was, sir, so I thought I'd better give you a hint. The squire's taking on awful!"

"Here, I'll ride back 'Golightly.' You get something from the Greyhound," said Ralph; then hurrying, pale as death into the house.

"I must go! Good-bye, good-bye!" he cried wildly, stammered out the fatal news, kissed Helen once with white lips, mounted 'Golightly,' and galloped back to Broadholme as fast as the horse would take him.

A couple of out-door men were waiting about the Warburtons' house; neither spoke a word as they took his horse. He sprang up the steps and entered the quaint hall. His uncle was pacing up and down in a state of frenzy. He walked straight up to Ralph and shook his clenched fist in his face, crying, in a voice he was obliged to subdue:

"You've murdered my son! You've killed my boy! How dare you show your face in this room? I tell you you've killed my boy!"

"Where is he?" asked Ralph wildly.

"What's that to you?" demanded the Squire. "I tell you, you've murdered my son! You might have waited!" he added, with a bitter taunt, "you'd not have had long to wait! But you've overdone it, sir! You shall smart for it!"

"Where is he?" repeated Ralph, trying to push past his uncle, and too overwrought for courtesy. "Where is he?"

"What's that to you? Leave the house this moment?" stormed the maddened father. "This roof can't cover both of us!"

He tried to bar the way, but Ralph was too much for him.

"He wants me!" he cried under his breath, springing up the stairs.

"He wants no one now! Come back I say; don't go one step further!"

"He wants me, and he shall have me!" returned Ralph.

"Come back you, you, sir! come back!" his uncle called after him, smothering his voice as best he could, but gesticulating with fury.

Ralph hurried on.

"Tell my aunt I'm here," he whispered to a girl who was waiting outside Hugh's door.

She nodded slowly, lifting the corner of her apron to her eyes as she did so. In a moment or two Mrs. Warburton came to him.

"O, Ralph! Ralph!" she cried, trying to stifle both her voice and her sobs; "why did you leave him? O, you've killed him! you've killed my darling!"

"Does he want me?" asked Ralph, almost choking with emotion.

"O," sobbed the mother, "his poor eyes have been asking for you all the time, and you never came—you never came!"

"May I go into him now?" said Ralph huskily.

"Leave the house, sir! Am I the master of my own house or not?" exclaimed Mr. Warburton, who had followed his nephew up stairs, seizing Ralph's arm with a powerful grip. "You dare to go into my boy's room! You've murdered him, sir—murdered him!"

"O, don't! don't," cried the wife, trying to separate the two men. "Our darling needs him, dear; he must come!"

"Am I master here, I want to know?" demanded the husband.

"No, no; you're not master to-day!" said the wife, in wild agony. "Death's master now! Dear, you must let him come with me, indeed you must! Come, Ralph; he wants you."

They went softly into the darkened room. There was a still, marble face on the pillow—a marble hand on the quilt. Ralph took the chair by the bedside, and without a word placed his own strong hand over that cold frail one his cousin had no power to lift.

Hugh opened his eyes, let them rest on Ralph, and smiled faintly, as if he had at last found what he was seeking and was content; then he closed them again, and appeared to fall asleep.

Ralph sat there quietly hour after hour, as the day faded into night, and until the first flush of red touched the sky.

But before the dawning it was all over. Then Ralph rose from his watching and stole out of the house. For him, wandering homeless, all had come to an end; except the consciousness that for ever the gnawing sense of guilt would never leave him.

As if by instinct he groped his way down to Holmeside—along by the broad highway—down through the wet banks of the Lutterbourn. At last he was with her again; he hardly knew how it happened, she was in his arms, or he in hers.

"We must part—we must part for ever! I am not fit for you now! His face—I shall always see his face! I'm an outcast and a vagabond on the earth!"

But she clung to him; she would not let him go.

"Then so am I! It was the fault of both of us."

"You cannot love me now, Helen."

"Now, and for ever—for ever and a day!"

"I must hide myself at the world's end! You couldn't follow me so far?"

"To the world's end! aye, and to a mile beyond it!"

PART II.—LATITUDE 8 DEG. NORTH.

A WAVELESS sea, bluer than the bluest sapphire, on which float myriads of great white jelly-fish, faintly lapping a narrow belt of golden sand; dense vegetation growing almost to the water's edge; gigantic cotton-trees, stately palms, slender cocoa-nuts with wide spreading tufts of feathery foliage and clusters of green fruit, and broad-leaved bananas. Embedded in this ocean of verdure, innumerable round mud huts with pointed roofs of bamboo thatching, and tall square houses with corrugated iron gables, on which the tropical sun beats pitilessly; a West African town clustering around the feet of dark-wooded mountains under an exquisite opaline sky—lightness, brightness, heat, and the sun everywhere—and everywhere colour, pure and vivid as a tropical flower.

A verandah of one of those white houses—a wide verandah shaded from the blinding glare by hanging mats of woven grass; a young Englishman pacing restlessly up and down, now and then stopping to raise the matting and gaze impatiently seaward. The silence when he stops, and his footfall does not break it, is deathlike. He listens—listens—paces up and down

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in a growing fever of unrest, again touches the mat. Hark! At last the boom of the signal-gun! He drags back the blind, eagerly looks at the too well-known flag-staff; the flag is being run up—the mail is sighted. Then comes the worst of the waiting.

"Good Heavens! how she's crawling!" he exclaims, as he fixedly watches the steamer in the offing.

He has waited so long—so long patiently accepted a separation that was inevitable; now, with the steamer in sight, time seems insufferable. But it goes by—it goes by slowly, but it goes!

He leaves the house and the friends that are looking after him in the town—for his home is far away in the wilds and hurries down to a little wharf, where he finds a huge Kroo-man with a blue tattoo-mark about half-an-inch wide running from the top of his black forehead to the tip of his nose, lolling half-asleep in a large boat.

"Bannah Will!" he shouts, "make you get crew one time! Mail done come."

In a few minutes after great shouting of—

"Hi! you Frying Pan! Hi! you Slap Jack! Hi! you Lahai Hi! You Bottle of Beer! You lazy creatures!" Bannah Will manages to collect his "boys," the Englishman jumps into the boat, the black giant pushes off, and away they pull from the shore, where they watch the steamer until they can see where she will anchor; for as there is no proper landing-place it is always uncertain where she may stop. But they are nearing the vessel every minute. After all—will *she* be there? What if she is not? No, no, that would be too dreadful to happen. She must be there!

But to return to our narrative, and the sober past tense. Two years and a half before this, a fellow countryman of Bannah Will, with his boys, had the honour of bringing Ralph Warburton himself on shore, when he first arrived on the West Coast. He had had a bad time of it, one way and another, ever since that fatal day when he had lingered among the English apple trees with Helen Beresford. He had failed in a trust; he deserved to be punished—he did not deny it; he was as severe with himself as any man could be, but his punishment had been a hard one; still, it had done him good—it had made a man of him.

He had dropped talking of such trifling tasks as he had had to perform in England as "an awful grind." He knew, he learnt very soon after his arrival on the coast, that up to that time he had hardly done a good day's work in his life. After a couple of years incessant toil, broken only by African fevers, he had returned to England to recruit his health.

He had not ventured so much as to look at Broadholme; but he had married Helen, stayed at Holmeside six weeks and left her there with granny.

It had been a dreadful parting, worse even than the first one; but he had been firm.

"I can't let you be killed, Helen! Even for me you mustn't kill yourself!" And he had gone without her.

It was an awful wrench; but there was an epidemic among the Europeans; the death-rate after his return to the coast was fearful; he was thankful she was safe at home.

The epidemic spared him, however; it took the men above him; he had learnt palm oil and other African produce well; he could cope with the wily native; and so he found himself the manager of Yolaba Factory on the Bockeroo river, and began to cherish a vague hope he might one day be able to see his wife again.

One evening, just after he had taken the oversight of Yolaba, he was sitting on the verandah in the bright moonlight alone, watching a great snake slowly gliding across the inclosure in front of his dwelling.

He was the only Englishman within many miles. He was tired, ill, depressed, craving for some one to speak to, when in came one of his men.

"Book done come, sir!"

"Book" proved to be a long letter from Helen; it had a black border. The sight made him tremble—his nerves were always in a frightful state out there—but it was in her hand. It covered many pages of thin paper, but the gist of it was this—

"My Dearest,—I am coming. You cannot stop me now. I shall have started before this reaches you. Poor granny's little annuity died with her; but the trifle she was able to save will just pay for my outfit and passage. I leave by the *Gonda* on the 18th November."

It was the *Gonda* towards which Bannah Will and his crew pulled Ralph Warburton across the sapphire sea, that washed the shore of the African town clustered around the base of the dark mountains; that town was a hundred and fifty miles from Ralph's new home.

Well, Bannah Will pulled about and watched the steamer; they came nearer and nearer; Ralph suddenly felt his heart all but jumping out of his body. There she was on the deck—there was his Helen!

"Hi! de missis done come!" shouted Bannah Will gleefully, as he saw Warburton waving his hat with all his might.

"Yes!" cried Warburton wildly, "de missis done come! de missis done come for true!"

O, but the bobbing up and down in that boat! The seeing each other, the waving, the signalling, the not being able to stop!

But at last—ah, well.

Yet, somehow there was an element of matter-of-factness about it that was incongruous, almost laughable. Luggage and that sort of thing would jostle up against the other sort of thing, you know; and there was so much to do, so much to see, such a lot of people to say "good-bye" to, so many to say "how do you do?" to; such a strange new country, such a kind, open-hearted hospitality within the square white house that rose among the verdure of the town, such sympathy—for out there, who does not know the anguish of parting, the bliss of meeting?—such, in fact, it was all a bewilderment of delight to Helen, in spite of the overpowering heat and the glare everywhere.

"But we're not at home yet, darling, you know," said Ralph.

"Home," said Helen. "How strange it seems to have a home that is not in England!"

"Well," said he, with a shrug of the shoulders, "of course it isn't really home—that is, it hasn't been yet; but it's going to be different now de missis done come!"

"Holmeside never seemed like home to me after you were gone," said Helen. "So I came to the conclusion that where you were must be home. Do you feel—I mean, I suppose you are glad I've come?"

"Glad! If you knew the torture of loneliness I've endured, you'd wonder I was here to meet you—that's all."

"Poor old man," said Helen; and she gave him a look which, not being able to stand, he interrupted in the proper way, there being no one about just then.

They had to do a hundred and fifty miles in an open boat before they could call themselves at home, so after two or three days "in town," Mr. and Mrs. Warburton said good-bye to even such vestiges of European

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life as were to be found there, and set out for the lonely factory on the far-distant Bockeroo River.

After three days in the boat, and two nights spent—one at the mission station on the coast, and the other on a small island, where they were the only Europeans—they left the open sea, and pulled a few miles up the wide mouth of the Bockeroo River, under a brilliant moonlight, until presently the monotonous dip of the oars ceased to break the death-like silence before a narrow wharf, behind which was distinctly visible a long white building with a veranda running the entire length of it.

How still! how utterly lonely it all was! Not a creature to be seen, not a sound heard, no light; no trace of any human being! Surely it must be more than a mile beyond the world's end!

"How's this!" cried Ralph angrily. "No one about! Where's the watchman?"

"Rope-yarn!" he shouted. "Rope-yarn!" he repeated several times at the top of his voice; and a minute or two afterwards, a light moved slowly down to the water's edge.

"Here, Bannah Will, make you carry the missis!" continued Ralph.

"Hi, you Bottle of Beer, make you come help carry de missis!" Bannah Will shouted in his turn; and together they managed to lift Helen through the shallow water, and then returned to fetch her husband.

"Is that our home, Ralph?" asked Helen, as soon as he was within speaking distance.

"No darling; that's the store. Here, Rope-yarn, make you show the house one time!"

Rope-yarn, holding his lantern close to the ground, for fear of treading on a snake, went before them, up a rough path, across a bit of country road, and entered, by rough wooden gates, a wide inclosed space, within which was another long white building. Through the yard, up a flight of brick steps, went Rope-yarn and the young married couple. On the verandah, Ralph dismissed the man.

"Now, my love," he said, and together they entered a great bare room. He turned and kissed her. "Our new home, Helen. Welcome to Yolaba!"

"At last!" she said, with a sigh of content, clinging to him for one instant before she looked around.

"At last!" he echoed. "And not much to see now you've got here!" he went on presently, altering his tone.

There was the great bare room—eight windows, through which the brilliant moonlight was pouring; four doors, two cane chairs, a well-worn English dining-table, a sofa, and two packing-cases from Whiteley's.

"You're not over-furnished, my dear!" said Helen. "But never mind; there's *you!*"

"And you!"

"But this will never do!"

"Won't it?"

"No; there are the cases to unpack. You've never seen me yet as a woman of business, you know."

"You don't mean to say you're going to do that to-night?"

"I am, though!"

Those cases were unpacked that night.

At half past five next morning they were again in the long bare room, and Ralph was saying:

"Now, Helen, now come and look at your new home! Come on to the verandah."

She followed him, and then stood speechless for a while, taking in the utter loveliness of the scene.

This is what she saw: a broad river; far off in the distance the sea, its breakers splashing like silver. Near at hand, the path, by which she had come last night, she now saw bordered on each side with a hedge covered with pink blossoms, over which countless humming birds, more brilliant than jewels, were hovering, their tiny bodies quivering and sparkling in the sun as they sucked the honey through their long straight beaks. A bread-nut tree, with large shiny dark green leaves, all but looked in at the young English couple on the verandah, and palms were everywhere; and everywhere the busy little rice birds, gorgeous in black and yellow velvet, were stripping the green off the broad palm leaves, chatter, chatter, chattering incessantly. A solitary cocoa-nut tree watched over a cemented duck-pond in one corner of the inclosed space in front of the house; in another a group of glossy black-skinned girls, with gleaming white teeth, were drawing water at a thatched-roofed well, laughing and talking as if life were the greatest joke in the world.

"How do you like it now, Helen?" asked Ralph, who had been gazing, not at the scenery, but at his wife's rapt face.

"It can't be real!" she murmured dreamily.

"It is good to look at, isn't it?" said Ralph.

"Surely it can't be so unhealthy as you say! It's too lovely—it's too lovely even to be real!"

"Then you're not sorry you've come?" he asked.

She put out her hand; he took it.

"I'd like to kiss you for that," he said fondly. "But those girls can see us. We always have to be setting examples here. Well, now, there's housekeeping beginning. Here comes your fishmonger."

A boy, attired in a red cotton handkerchief, came up the path, carrying a bunch of brilliant fish, just caught, and threaded on a piece of grass. A minute after the native cook came in.

"Boy done bring fish? Say eight copper, sar!"

"Here, Helen, give him fourpence; I'm going to turn all this sort of thing over to you," said Ralph, and then, looking again towards the yard, "Ah," he exclaims, "here comes a particular pet of mine!"

A little tot of a girl, in a loose blue and white muslin garment, and coral earrings in her baby ears, the prettiest little black creature imaginable, was coming towards the house, poising a great melon on her woolly head.

"The sweet little thing!" cried Helen. "Call her up. Do let me hear you speak to her."

Ralph called her.

"Good morning, sar. Good morning, marm. Me mammy say six coppers, sar," piped the most musical voice in the world.

"What a darling! Threepence to pay, Ralph."

Further conversation was prevented by the resonant tones of the factory gong. Ralph drank off the cup of tea that had been waiting for him.

"Well, dear, we must part until eleven o'clock; so good-bye for a time.

Simple details these; but it was Helen's first morning on the Bockeroo River. They were impressed on her heart for ever.

At eleven Ralph came in, vigorously mopping his face.

"By Jove! By Jove!" he exclaimed, as he caught sight of his wife arrayed in a loose princess robe of cool white batiste, the wide sleeves showing her smooth, firm arms. "O, I say! By Jove!"

It was his method of expressing astonishment and admiration.

Certainly if Helen Beresford in her serge among the apple blossoms of Holmeside had looked a grand creature,

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Helen Warburton at Yolaba in her white robe was grander.

"And what a breakfast table! A whole set of china, I'll declare! Now I begin to understand the expression, 'A woman of faculty.'"

Helen smiled: it is so nice to be praised by a husband—

A little tot of a girl was coming towards the house, poising a great melon on her woolly head.

a fact that is sometimes forgotten. She smiled, took his hot hand, and led him to an object covered by a cloth.

"Guess!" she said mysteriously.

"Couldn't! My brains won't run to so much excitement," said he, sinking into a chair.

"I must help you, then. What is this?"

"Holly, by Jove! You don't mean to say—but not don't tell me till after breakfast, and I'm strong enough to bear it. You don't mean to tell me—I'll declare, next Wednesday's Christmas Day! So it is! I know, I know! It's our Christmas pudding!"

* * * * *

"Here's a pretty go!" ejaculated Ralph, as he came in to breakfast one morning, scowling furiously, and mopping his face more vigorously than ever. "Here's Jackson, my only Englishman, down with fever! Heaven knows what I'm to do among that pack of thieving rascals. I can't keep my eye on them all; I have to be all over the place. There'll be fine plundering;" and Ralph began to nibble at his lips and moustache, as his manner was when overwrought and nervous.

"Who is looking after Jackson?" asked Helen, as she handed her husband the tea he so greatly needed.

"Black nurse," said Ralph. "First-rate; never leaves the patient an instant; but what I'm to do without him Heaven knows, I don't."

"What is it you want done, Ralph? I mean, what is it that's most particular?"

"Oh, I want somebody with an eye," cried Ralph moodily. It was hotter than ever that morning

"An eye! I have two—at your service, if they can be of any use to you," said Helen, with that admirable coolness of hers.

"O, I can't take you in there," groaned Ralph.

"Should I be of the slightest use?" asked Helen.

"Why, of course! What a question!"

"Very well; then I shall come."

"Well, you are a brick! But I don't like it."

"Just the thing I shall enjoy. Bless you, Ralph, you don't know me even yet as a woman of business! I feel I've heaps of unexpended energy left still."

"Energy! How can any one who isn't a salamander have a scrap of energy in this furnace?" groaned Ralph, letting his arms fall limply on each side of his Madeira chair.

"Still, the place must be driven," put in Helen.

"Con-con-confound it, yes!"

Half-an-hour later Helen was on her way to the factory; "factory" being the local word for "store."

A number of native canoes were drawn up near the wharf. A negro was sleeping by the water's edge, with the rope that held his boat tied to his toe. In the various sheds palm-oil was being measured, and other native produce being collected and weighed.

Helen went up a flight of steps into an enormous room, very well built. Through the room ran a long counter, at the back of which were rows of shelves displaying Madras handkerchiefs, bright prints, blue baftas, crockery, tobacco, tinned provisions, tools, beads, and indeed, to quote Ralph, "everything from a needle to an anchor." As the store had not been long reopened, it was just then

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very popular with the natives. It was crowded all day long.

"What a din! Shall I ever be able to hear myself speak?" said Helen to herself, as she paused bewildered.

The noise was frightful; the room filled with people from all sorts of out-of-the-way places on the neighbouring rivers, all chattering, all wanting to be served at once. The heat was overpowering; and the odour—paugh! A hundred glittering pairs of eyes were turned on the tall white woman in her sweeping robes.

Mutterings ran through the crowd.

"Hi, daddy, de missis done come! Hi, mammy, de missis done come one time! De missis fine woman for true!"

That clear organising brain of hers soon made order out of chaos. In a very short time Helen found that she had three things to do—to keep an eye that nothing was stolen, to write out "good notes" or orders for the native traders who sold palm-oil or palm-nuts downstairs, and bought blue baftas or Madras handkerchiefs upstairs, and to "look after the pieces" generally.

She did it well. She liked it. It was singularly congenial to her; and, above all, it was invaluable to Ralph, who seemed compensated for all his troubles whenever he snatched a hasty glance at her neat brown head and white-robed figure.

The Englishman, Jackson, got well; but still Helen kept her post at the desk, and still her watchful eye held the wiliest native in awe.

So Ralph and Helen worked together until one afternoon, when, there happening to be a comparative lull in business, Helen left the desk and took a chair in the doorway, between her husband's private office and the store. She had another chair in front of her, over which was thrown a gay-coloured scarf, such as they sold to the natives for body-scarves, and Helen, who always must have her hands busy, was ravelling out the ends to make the fringe, while she kept an eye to things in general, when she felt a slight pain across the brows. It was very slight, but it was peculiar.

"Fever!" she said; and she laid down her work at once.

At once—and for ever. She left the half-fringed scarf hanging over the back of the chair, and crossed the floor to her husband, who was at the desk in the middle of the room.

"There's such a curious pain across here," she said, putting her hand just above her eyes.

Ralph looked up at her; his face changed, his heart sank.

"I daren't leave. Jackson must stay in the palm oil shed. Go up to the house at once. Get some hot tea. Lie down. Pile on all your thickest things," he said hurriedly.

She went away alone, through the burning glare of the sunshine; but she was shivering with icy coldness when she reached the house. Burning heat succeeded the cold. She was down with fever.

It was a terrible attack. She grew worse and worse. She suffered horrors unimaginable by those who have never gone through them. Ralph was half mad with dread; he knew only too well how critical her state was; but the inexorable factory had to be driven all the same. It was most distressing to leave her; but business would not stop because Ralph Warburton's wife was hovering between life and death. They neither of them ever knew how they managed to live through the next few days.

The fever subsided; but the weakness that followed was almost more appalling. She could do nothing but cry by the hour together from sheer prostration. Then to make things worse, if possible, a series of tornadoes ushered in all the miseries of the rainy season.

One evening when Ralph came in, Helen was lying on the sofa weeping piteously, and too weak even to turn to welcome him. He tried to comfort her, to rouse her, to get her to take something; but all in vain. He was in despair; she seemed sinking before his eyes. He could not stand it; an hour afterwards he was down with fever himself. That attack—it was a bad one while it lasted, probably saved his wife's life. In her terror for him she shook off her own illness, until he partially recovered.

One evening about five o'clock, Ralph, who had just managed to drag himself about the factory all day, came in quite done up, more dead than alive, and sat down in the veranda by Helen's side.

It was a fine evening. Helen had been sitting there for some time, watching the line of silver breakers far off at the river's mouth, the big tears streaming slowly down her face as she looked at them. They seemed, that distant open sea seemed, to her the only way back to civilisation, to England, to home. She dried up her tears as well as she could when she saw her husband coming; but her eyes would keep brimming over; she was so weak, so home-sick, and so was he.

"O, those two hours at Holmeside—what have they done for us?" Ralph groaned. "Shall we scrape all together, and go back and starve?"

Ralph now had the most melancholy way of putting things. Helen broke into a hopeless fit of bitter weeping. Before she could sob out an answer the black cook appeared.

"We no got noting for dinner, marm."

"What, not even a fowl?" asked Ralph.

"He done finish, sar."

There was a dead silence after this announcement. Out of doors all was still; even Helen had ceased sobbing for an instant.

Suddenly Ralph bent forward, as if listening eagerly, holding up his hand to keep the black man from uttering another word. He listened—far off, from miles and miles away down the river, came stealing, only to be distinguished by the practised ear, the peculiar chant of a canoe crew.

"It's the boat with the letters!" he exclaimed.

It stopped presently at the little landing-stage; the head man of the crew brought up a japanned tin box. It held letters and papers.

A letter from England; another letter with a deep black border. It was from Ralph's aunt, it was kind, but heart-broken. His uncle was dead. He died forgiving him. Broadholme was Ralph's; and so was the money the letter contained.

A fortnight later Bannah Will and his crew pulled Ralph and his wife back to the town that clusters round the base of the wooded mountains, but not, this time, over a smooth and waveless sea. As they stepped on to the deck of the English steamer Helen cried fervently:

"Oh, let me kiss the boards!"

But the bright sun came out again; the lovely West Coast looked lovelier than ever.

"After all," said Helen, as she and her husband stood side by side gazing on the receding shore, "after all, it is very, very beautiful."

"Especially when seen from the deck of a homeward-bound steamer," said Ralph, as if concluding his wife's sentence.

Lizzie Alldridge.

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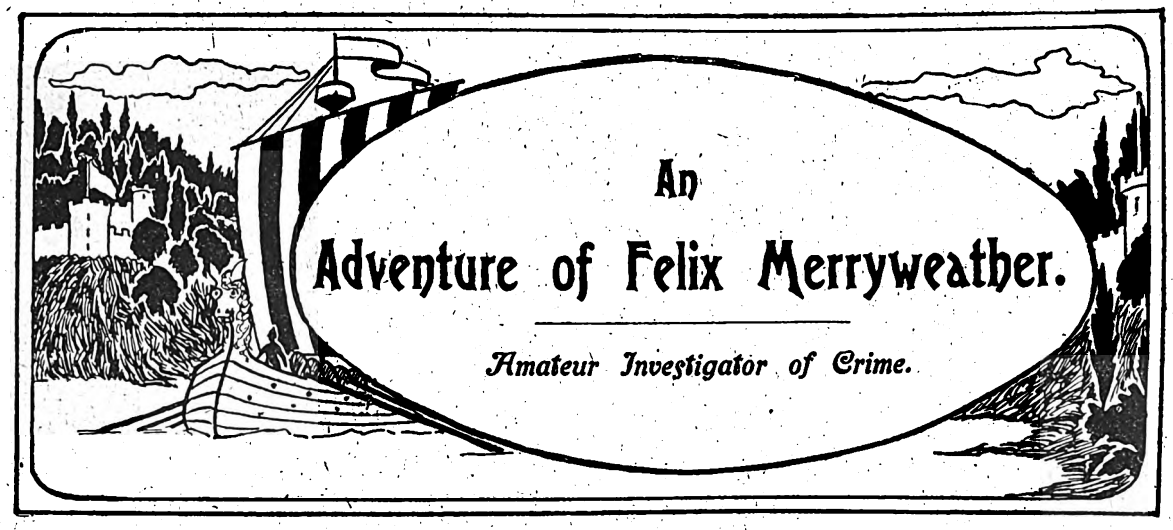

An Adventure of Felix Merryweather.

Amateur Investigator of Crime.

Felix Merryweather was a would-be investigator of crime. He had never been professionally engaged but he lived in continual hopes. When a retired corn-chandler has arrived at the age of sixty it is not usual for him to embark on the "lot that is not a happy one." Nor is it to be supposed he can possibly make anything else but a rod for his own back by indulging in such a strange hobby.

Felix, however, thought otherwise. He had been led away from the normal aspirations and contentment of his three score years, by a certain celebrated magazine, and the marvellous achievements of a famous detective whose name had become a household word. One of the earliest effects of this fascination for anything and everything concerning the doings of the aforesaid character of fiction, was the removal of all that was Merryweather's to Baker Street. This was a bold move—in more senses than one; for he had amongst his possessions a wife, whose scruples were not so easily overcome.

"You must be simply mad!" she said, soon after the move; "shutting yourself up in this horrible neighbourhood; what with the yells of costermongers and newsboys all day, and the whistling for cabs and policemen all night—why, it's enough to drive a sane person silly!"

"True—true—my dear!" Felix had replied glibly; "but think of the splendid study of character; think how great it is to deduce the false from the fair. Why, in time I shall be able to accurately tell from the voices of itinerant callers the very quality of their goods!"

At which Mrs. Merryweather sniffed disdainfully.

"Now, my dear Martha," he continued impressively, "only this morning I complained to you about the milk Smith left. I distinctly heard an unusual ring in the man's yodel. It was not a genuine cry of Milk-oh. My deductive faculties enabled me to see immediately that one of two things had occurred; the man had either doctored his milk and betrayed himself unintentionally or he had drunk some, and the added water with boracic acid spoke for themselves."

Martha had put up with several such instances of her husband's constructive abilities. Unfortunately for her, Baker Street yielded a good many, and proved a happy hunting-ground for Felix's hobby.

There was not a crime committed in the whole of the metropolis of which he was unaware.

He carefully preserved each newspaper cutting that dealt with the police-courts, and had every case at his fingers' ends.

He was very strong on motives, and could discourse by the hour on what prompted so and so to do so and so, when there was not even the shadow of possibility of his knowing.

With practice he became an adept in the study of foot-step sounds, and could readily detect in the silence of the night the difference between the "pit" of a homeward bound chorus-girl and the "pat" of Robert on his beat.

He was wont to hint that even dust-carts left infallible marks along the tracks traversed, which could be detected with some difficulty by anyone who cared to study the subject.

In spite of all, Felix, for several weeks after his sojourn in Baker Street, could get no case.

He had a dressing-gown made, most faithfully copied from the pattern of the one worn by his fictitional master. It absolutely bristled with suggestions and methods. One could easily conjure up, as Felix did, by steadfastly gazing at it the representation of a plan of Dartmoor, the Birdcage at Newgate, the corridors of New Scotland Yard, and a condemned cell.

He went so far as to procure a hypodermic syringe, but at the last moment felt too nervous to inject, so he decided to use the article as a "prop."

At last it dawned upon him that the only way to get a case was to advertise.

If the mountain would not come to Mahomet—Mahomet must go to the mountain.

Accordingly an advertisement appeared in all the leading daily papers one morning to the effect that if anyone wanted anything done Felix Merryweather was the man to do it.

The second morning after this advertisement came out Felix had just breakfasted, when a terrific ringing at the front door bell announced a visitor.

He rubbed his hands exultantly: "A case—a case, Martha, at last! Show them up here, whoever they are!" he shouted.

Then throwing himself into an easy chair, he placed his finger tips together in the most professional manner,

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and awaited his visitor. Heavy footsteps soon resounded upon the staircase, and the door was suddenly flung open violently.

Evidently the visitor was in a temper, for instead of knocking he had literally kicked the door open.

Merryweather jumped up nervously, as a big man with a red face blundered into the room.

"Is your name Merryweather?" he shouted, with all the force triple expansion lungs could give.

"Yes," said Felix meekly, as he eyed the stick his visitor carried suspiciously.

"Very well, I want your advice—and you can hook it," said the burly one, turning to Mrs. Merryweather, who stood there anxiously.

That lady thereupon gave him an indignant glare, and swept from the room.

"Won't you sit down?" Merryweather said timidly when they were alone.

"No, I do my business standing—you're a detective?"

"Yes."

"You can find out anything about anyone, eh?"

"Yes."

"I want you to find out something for me, d'ye see?"

"I am sure I shall be very pleased."

"Someone is making a fool of me, and when I find out who it is I mean to break every bone in his body!"

This sentence came out with a roar, and to add more force to it the visitor brought his stick down heavily on the table, causing the cups and saucers to dance wildly.

"Pray calm yourself," said Merryweather, relieved to find he was not personally threatened.

"Er—a case of blackmail?"

"Black—umph! It's nothing but a red mail. Look at these, man," and he threw on the table a packet of letters.

Merryweather undid the fastenings, and drew the contents from the first envelope.

There was no letter, but merely a white card on which appeared a small red cross, with the somewhat enigmatical word "Remember," written underneath. The other eleven envelopes contained an exact facsimile.

With fears fast vanishing and increasing interest, Merryweather critically examined them. He noticed each envelope was addressed in the same handwriting to:

Mr. Bull,
Butcher,
St. Marylebone.

"You are Mr. Bull, of course?" he asked.

"I am."

"By the postmarks you have received these at the rate of one a week?"

"Every Saturday morning for twelve weeks; the last came this morning, and I won't be insulted any longer. Just you find out who the sender is. *I'll* do the rest, d'ye hear?"

"Let me see! Hum! All these have been sent by the same party?" said Merryweather, as he again carefully scrutinised the envelopes through a large magnifying-glass.

"Any fool can see that," said Mr. Bull testily.

"Now, I have a theory," commenced Merryweather, when another bang resounded on the table.

"I don't want any theory," thundered Mr. Bull. "I want the man, and by next Saturday too, or I'll brand you as an impostor!" And without another word the wrathful visitor burst out of the apartment.

For a moment Merryweather was speechless, but he quickly recovered himself, for the mystery of the Red Crosses fascinated him.

His irate wife entered the room the moment the boom of the front door proclaimed that Mr. Bull had left.

She found her spouse crawling along the carpeted floor with a tape measure in one hand and the magnifying glass in the other. Every now and then he paused to sneeze, for his nose was within an inch of the dusty carpet.

"What on earth are you doing?" she gasped.

Merryweather stopped, and sitting on his heels, said impressively:

"Now, Martha, you know my methods—or I should say *his* methods, I never neglect trifles no matter how small they are. My object is to obtain the size of my client's boots. There must be some impression on the carpet. Armed with a record like that there is no knowing when the knowledge might be of vital importance."

"Mind the next time those boots are near they do not leave an impression on you," Mrs. Merryweather said sententiously.

Her husband evidently did not hear what she said, for he continued his investigations in spite of her remonstrances.

He afterwards proceeded to go over the apologies for letters again. They certainly did not yield much data. In fact, with the exception of the handwriting and the postmark—none at all. The former was in a bold hand, such as anyone from a schoolboy to a warehouseman might use, the latter stated that the Euston Road was the office of origin.

They all bore the same impress.

"Well," said his wife after an unusually long pause. "What do they mean?"

"I think these crosses are sent with a sinister design. Our client's life is in danger, and there is no time to be lost in getting on the tracks of the miscreant."

"Felix Merryweather," impressively exclaimed Martha, "I've had enough of this tomfoolery. If a crime is intended, the police ought to take the matter in hand, what good is it for you to poke your nose into other people's business?"

"In matters of this kind, great delicacy is needed, my dear, the police would be powerless—you must leave me alone for awhile and I can then think out the mystery."

When he was alone Merryweather took a violin from a case and played all the most mournful airs he could think of, from Ben Bolt to Chopin's Marche Funebre.

He played for over two hours, and then smoked three pipes right off. When Martha opened the door to announce lunch she was immediately driven back by dense fumes of the vilest tobacco-smoke possible. For a whole week Merryweather spent his mornings in the same way.

In the afternoons and evenings he haunted the precincts of the Euston Road post-office and the Empire respectively.

Friday night came, and no clue had been discovered or headway made at all in spite of his exertions, and he was about to take his violin from its case once more when a ring was heard at the front door, and the next moment the servant handed him a note.

"From my client," he muttered as he tore the envelope open, and so it proved. It ran: "The inclosed has just arrived. Come round to me at once.—JOHN BULL."

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Trembling with excitement Merryweather unfolded the letter inclosed. Undoubtedly it came from the same quarter as the cards, for there was the red cross largely displayed, and beneath were the following words:

"Do not fail to come to-night at 8.30 p.m. to 150, Tenby Street, W.—For the day of retribution is at hand."

There was no signature appended.

"Good gracious," gasped Merryweather, "the scoundrels—this is a decoy, they mean murder." And he wiped the perspiration from his brow. Then pulling out his watch he noted it was then 8 o'clock. There was not a moment to be lost.

"Where are you going now?" said his wife, coming in as he was struggling into his overcoat.

"Only to see Mr. Bull, my dear," he replied, with a nervous hesitation, for he was fixed so to speak, with her eye.

"Felix," she cried, suddenly bursting into tears, "you are going on some dangerous errand. Oh, why did you ever take up this horrid business?"

"I shan't be long dear," he murmured as he endeavoured to stop the saline torrent of wifely devotion with a red silk handkerchief.

"Let me come too," she urged between her sobs, "we have always stood together, let us die together."

But Merryweather was obdurate on this point, he had no intention whatever of sacrificing his own life, and he certainly would not risk hers. So amidst a storm of hysterical remonstrance, he strode from the domestic hearth on his important mission, leaving her to her sad reflections.

Mr. Bull was fully prepared for keeping the mysterious appointment, and when Merryweather arrived they set off immediately. The butcher's pugnacious demeanour had not abated in the very least, and as he strode along with his little old companion by his side, he continually uttered curses loud and deep, against the anonymous correspondent.

That he, John Bull, should be a butt for somebody's threats simply took his breath away. There was a bad time however coming for whoever it was, when the meeting should take place.

The moment they entered Tenby Street it was patent that something unusual was in progress. Merryweather's trained eye saw that at a glance, for the whole place was in an extraordinary turmoil.

Crowds of people blocked the pavements, seeming to be labouring under great excitement. The roadway was jammed with every variety of vehicle imaginable, from the coster's barrow to an up-to-date motor-car. Everybody was trying to get to the middle part of the street where the numbers of the houses ran highest.

Each moment fresh contingents poured into the street from both ends.

Every class and every profession were represented in that motley throng!

It was the strangest crowd ever brought together. Shoe-blacks, sweeps, printers' devils, lady type-writers, soldiers, gentlemen who had studied the nice conduct of their walking sticks, and hospital nurses, all surged along in the one direction. The few policemen were powerless, Mafeking night was but a twinkling star in the sky compared with this.

The butcher was flabbergasted and so was Merryweather.

What did it all mean?

Ribald cries and shouts of the mob rendered conversation impossible. All the windows of the houses were thrown wide open, and countless heads appeared.

The excitement was only increased when several fire-engines galloped up from all parts, while behind them a strong force of police ploughed their way through the noisy gathering.

Of the two the firemen made the best headway, for in less time than it takes to tell they set the hose at play, and a stream of water shot out, driving the masses away like chaff before the wind.

Ill-fate decreed that Merryweather and his companion were drawn into the full vortex. Between a lumbering coal cart and a brewer's dray they were impelled ever onward by the irresistible force from behind.

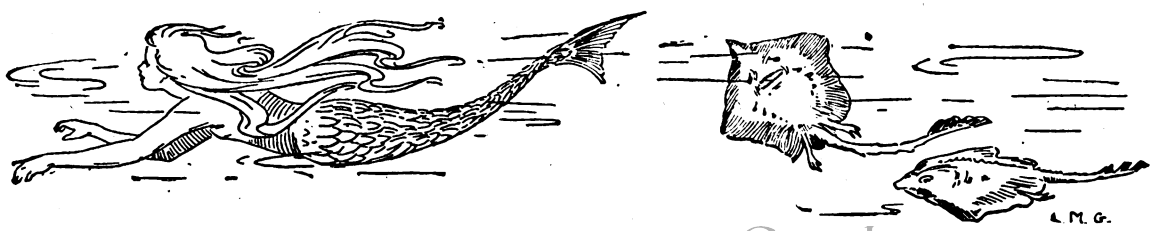
Hatless, coatless, drenched to the skin, and almost torn to pieces, they eventually reached their homes thoroughly exhausted.

Felix Merryweather that night registered a solemn vow this should be his first and last case in detective work.

The next morning's paper gave some explanation as to what really had occurred. Several hospital students to perpetrate a practical joke, had cribbed an idea from a celebrated humourist—which had had far-reaching results. Sending supposed orders to various firms requesting goods to be delivered at a certain time, and inserting interesting advertisements in all the papers, they had contrived this delightful little surprise. A false alarm to the nearest fire-station turned out the brigade, and the police followed. Other dodges, such as the red cross cards to men of Mr. Bull's pugnacious disposition, and others too numerous to mention, had merely heaped fuel on to the fire, and the *tout ensemble* produced their desired effect—*i.e.*—a riot.

Shortly after this painful episode Felix Merryweather, to Martha's great delight, removed all his goods and chattels from the house in Baker Street to a picturesque cottage in a quiet retiring country village, where the rest of his days he said should be devoted to the study of natural history!

Vivian Grey.



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Tom Tarrant's Emergency Ration.

Colour-Sergeant Thomas Tarrant, late 4th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, as a veteran who had seen service in every quarter almost of the globe, is always worth listening to upon the subject of his many escapes by trench and field.

He is not by any means an old man, as mere years go, but a nasty wound or two, especially an ugly sword-cut that nearly severed his left arm at the shoulder, and which, even to-day, is a source of periodical pain and trouble to him, have contributed to visibly age him; although in carriage, and mentally, he is as upright and as clear-headed as ever.

An unusually modest man, it is with the utmost difficulty that he can be got to talk of his own personal doings. He will discourse by the hour together upon general military matters, or of a comrade's prowess or endurance; but he is strangely and persistently reticent where and whenever his own share comes in.

There had for some time been a story afloat with regard to an heroic action of his that I had long desired to hear from his own lips. It was only on one evening when I had literally pinned him into his particular arm-chair by the fire in the coffee-room, and manifested my deliberate intention to let him have no peace until he had duly satisfied my curiosity, that I was successful in extracting the narrative from him.

"Nothing—nothing—there was nothing in it," said he, between long puffs at his pipe.

"Well, sergeant!" I said, "let us be the judges as to that. Why unduly belittle yourself? We know that you are no braggart, and in a certain sense your modesty is highly creditable to you; but, well, in fact (and I speak, I am sure, for all present) in fact I—we want to hear the tale."

First fidgetting about a bit, and then carefully knocking his pipe out on the top bar of the grate, the old soldier drew himself smartly up, and began:

"There'll be a lot as'll say as what I'm going to tell you isn't true; because, as they say, there wasn't such a thing as an 'emergency ration' known in the Army at the time when Kitchener avenged Gordon.

"And they're right in a way, for the way they look at it there wasn't; but you'll see before I've done that my story depends upon the spirit of the thing, and that to all intents and purposes, 'emergency rations,' if unofficial, and unrecognised by the authorities, have been existent for many a year.

"Of course you know as I'm staff-sergeant now, as I lives out and does my bit of recruiting; but in the days I speak of I wasn't married, and lived in barracks.

"There'd been a lot of talk in the regiment about its chance of selection for active service, if Government decided to back up the Sirdar with a British force, sufficient, with the 'fellah' troops, to crush the Mahdi for good and all.

"There was but one opinion with regard to the justice of the cause. Some of us had fought under Gordon in China (I, for one) while at least two had served with him in the earlier days of his Governorship of the Soudan.

"I don't think as there was a man of the 'Warwickshire's,' save one, as didn't jump to go, when the 'route' came at last, with the order to increase to full strength, and for departure in six weeks for Alexandria.

"This *one* was Hartley Prawle, a gentleman ranker, who had joined some six months before.

"He was a big, red-haired chap, and like most people of that colour, fiery and bad-tempered generally.

"It was my duty to do the 'licking-into-shape' of the recruits of the regiment; and amongst those who in due course passed through my hands was Private Prawle.

"At the time I could not quite understand why he should have taken such a dislike to me, as he undoubtedly did.

"I treated him no worse than the other 'rookeys,' beyond having to be more strict with him, owing to his slowness in mastering the manual and other drills.

"Tarrant!" said the Colonel to me one day, soon after Prawle joined, "that fellow wants well looking after! Never mind his fine speech and manners—make him toe the mark the same as another man. I'll have no gilt-edged soldiers in my regiment!"

"But I fancy I knew how to manage my men better than the Colonel did; for until the advent of Private Prawle, I had always contrived, without failing in duty, to be on good terms with the 'new chums.'

"Prawle was so backward and slovenly in his drill and military duties generally, that I was forced to include him in the latest batch of recruits during the last week or two's training before leaving England.

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"He not only didn't like this, but was downright savage, and took every opportunity of 'kicking out' whenever he thought he could do so with impunity.

"I had been compelled to report him for gross disobedience and disorderliness; the result being three days' extra pack drill!

"I can see him now, marching doggedly up and down the parade, his face as red as his coat with passion, and his lips moving in half-suppressed cursing of me as his tormentor.

"His hour up, he halted at command, for me to 'dismiss' him,

"I had done this, and was turning away to go to my own quarters, when, without word of warning, he clubbed his rifle, and swinging it round in the air, dealt me a murderous blow on the back of the head, knocking me down, and rendering me unconscious.

"I was laid up for several days, so that it was nearly a fortnight before I attended in the orderly-room to bear witness against my assailant.

"I'm not, I can conscientiously say, a revengeful man; no one can ever say that I took advantage of his weakness, however much I may have personally suffered by it.

"I think that in this case I felt even more sorry for Prawle than angry with him.

"Bad-tempered, and all that, he certainly was; but, believing, as I do, that every man has some good points about him, if you can only know 'em, and, that by giving a dog a bad name, you practically condemn and execute him; I went before the Court Martial well-disposed than otherwise towards the prisoner.

"But it was of no use.

"Dogged, sullen, and with an evil-expression in his eyes, as I stepped forward to give my testimony, that boded ill for me should it ever be in his power in the future to do me a mischief, he persistently refused to plead either one way or the other.

"He had of course rendered himself liable to at least two years' imprisonment, and to be drummed out, and had circumstances not been as they were, he would, as sure as his name was what it was, have had to pay the penalty.

"'Sentence is deferred,' said the Colonel at the close of the proceedings. 'Halt! Sergeant!' he continued to me, as I was moving out of the room. 'Captain McIntyre tells me that, barring ill-temper, and a sort of laziness of disposition, Private Prawle has the making of a fine soldier in him. I suppose he knows, the man being in his company.

"'Now you have had the fellow in hand a good while—what's your opinion of him? You've suffered through him, I know, but I give you credit for bearing no malice, Come, now, Tarrant, is Prawle a subject for lenient treatment, seeing that we badly want all the fighting material we can get or keep!

"'Well, sir,' I said, saluting, 'if you'll pardon my freedom, it's like this. I should like to say that though he made me see stars, and many on 'em, and isn't, as you may say, particularly 'gone' on me, still I can't help feeling as Private Prawle is worth giving another chance to. He's got the fighting instinct—got it strong—and though he lets out sometimes wild and blind-like, depend upon it, sir, as he'll strike a good blow at this or at any other time, for Queen and country.

"'You are a generous enemy, seregant,' remarked the Colonel, 'and if we decide, owing to our need for men at this time, to look over his offence, he will have you to thank for it, for we should have been guided entirely by your report, and recommendation. Let him be brought up to-morrow morning before 10 o'clock parade.'

"The sentence passed on him was:

"'Confined to barracks until the day of embarkation.'

"Prawle escaped further punishment; but it was thought best to put him into another company, and so I saw but little of him, even when on board the transport, right up to our landing at Alexandria.

* * * * *

"It was the evening after Omdurman.

"Tired, bruised, hungry, thirsty, the troops were being withdrawn to their lines as quickly as might be.

"The smashing of the dervishes had been complete—absolutely complete—as all the world knows.

"The pursuit was over; the Khalifa's power was shattered to its very foundation; and the way was now open for General Kitchener right up to the Citadel of Khartoum.

"There are always stragglers on such occasions; men who, slightly wounded, perhaps have dropped by the way, and—have been overlooked; others who, of deliberate intention, have sneaked away, deserting their colours; while (as here) there were many who, just exhausted by the exertions of the day, sought some quiet corner, under a bush or a dwarf palm, in the hope of gaining if only a little rest.

"It was my fortune to be among the former of these.

"Early in the engagement I had been cut down by a ferocious dervish, mounted on a white horse, his scimitar sheering clean through the left shoulder to the bone.

"The loss of blood, together with the agony of the wound, made me feel sick and faint, so much so, that for a little while, at any rate, I cared not a jot whether I lived or died.

"Then I revived a bit, after managing to get a drink of water from my bottle. This was a job, as, somehow, the latter had got twisted under me, and the pain in my arm and shoulder made movement of any kind excruciating torture.

"It was curious that, in spite of my wound, I should, when my thirst was quenched, have developed an almost savage hunger.

"I had eaten nothing for over four-and-twenty hours, so it was not to be wondered at that I should feel a bit peckish.

"As I have said, there was no such thing as an official 'emergency ration' known to the Army in those days. But Tommy Atkins is resourceful, if he is anything at all and, when he can, looks well after 'number one.'

"Guessing that there would be a long fast, I (as no doubt did many others) provided myself before starting for the day's work, with a substantial mouthful or two. This I had concealed about me, trusting that when the need came I should find opportunity for discussing it.

"There was always the danger of being 'snagged' by native field thieves, or guerilla parties of the enemy. I didn't care a button who the disturbers of my peace might be, provided only that they did not appear on the scene before I had finished my snack.

"I had just contrived to wriggle the handkerchief containing it out of my breast, when I heard my name faintly spoken from the other side of the tree under which I had taken shelter.

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"Even before I dragged myself round, and faced the speaker, I knew who it was that I should find.

"It was Private Prawle.

"He lay in a heap, with his head resting sideways against the palm-stem.

"'Sergeant!' he says, with an odd smile in his eyes, and about the corners of his mouth, 'this is a good time for you to get your own back, isn't it?'

"I never felt so awfully mean in all my life as I did at that minute, with that there handkerchief of sly victuals in my fist, and this poor chap a-dying maybe, for the want of a bite and a sup!

"'Why, Prawle!' I says, 'What's up? Are you hurt?'

"'I don't know, sergeant, exactly,' says he. 'I'm not in any pain, and my head feels all right, though a bit giddy, but my legs! It's darned rum! but they havn't a bit of feeling in 'em! I might as well have wooden legs!'

"'Yes, that is rum!' I says, though I knew only too well that it were a dead bad sign his being in no pain, 'we must try and get you in first chance. I've got a bit of a scratch myself, but it'll be all O.K. when plaister and bandage come along!'

"'I say, sergeant,' he whispers then, 'I'm awful hungry' (so was I, Heaven knows; my stomach seemed like a concertina, with all the wind out). 'You haven't a toothful of anything to eat about you, have you?'

"Then he caught sight of my 'emergency ration,' and he just looked ever so wistful, first at *it*, and then at *me*, as though he could eat the both of us; and till I felt that uncomfortable and wicked as I could hardly bear myself.

"Right in front of us was a big sand-hill. On the right of it were our lines, while away to the left of it stretched a camel-trod, rutty track, leading into the desert, in the direction of Wady Halfa.

"I raised my head as soon as Prawle had asked me the question about the food, and said something as quickened every sense of hope and fear within me.

"From the right I could see approaching, at a hard gallop, a cavalry picket in search of unfortunates like ourselves, their lance heads and steel accoutrements glistening bravely in the flood of bright moonlight.

"I could also make out, riding hard up towards us along the track on the left, a crowd of wild, burnouse-clad figures.

"It was a race between life and death.

"Prawle saw them—both of them, as I did, and beseechingly begged of me a morsel, before, as was most probable, the earlier arrival of our enemies, made it impossible.

"What could I do? The man had once injured me—deeply, but Heaven knows! I had forgotten the offence, and had long since forgiven him.

"I should not miss the poor meal if the dervishes got it first, for I should assuredly then sup in Paradise!

"'Here, Prawle!' I says, 'eat this—every crumb of it! Make haste, man, or it will be too late!'

"Then I looked more intently and saw that the British were gaining, and that, given good luck, we might yet get the odd trick, and be saved—both of us.

"Then two cries came sounding almost together—the dervish 'Allah!' and the never-to-be-imitated shout from British throats. They ring in my ears now!

"But the effort to satisfy his over-mastering craving for food had been too much for poor Prawle.

"He tried to raise himself on his elbow to greet our comrades, who now were well in advance, but could not, and sank back fainting.

"Captain McIntyre, of our own regiment, the Warwickshires, who had accompanied the picket, was the first to dismount and speak to me.

"The dervishes, seeing that the race was lost—to them, turned sharp round, after discharging their matchlocks wildly, and at random, and galloped away in a cloud of dust towards the desert.

"'It's poor Prawle, sir,' says I to the captain. 'I don't know if I've done right, but he was so mortal hungry, he said, and—and—sir, I couldn't deny him the mouthful I had in my pocket!'

"'Right!' said the bluff old cavalry major, pushing his way up to Prawle, who was still unconscious, and lifting the poor chap's head on to his knee. 'Right! why of course you did right! It was just what he needed, man, something to give him strength. He'll mend—he'll mend! or—well, I'll eat my boots!'

"And, sure enough, mend he did! and when he fell, only a few months ago, at Modder River, I hear as it was while fighting like two men to save his major—Major McIntyre, during a Boer surprise.

"He had his faults, as who of us has not, but he was a fine soldier and a brave man.

"As for me, I have lived not to regret, even by ever so little, the transfer of my 'ration' on that night by the well of the Atbara at Omdurman.

"There, I hope you're satisfied, and, perhaps, you'll be good enough to send out for a new pipe."

He had used his old one to such purpose as a graphic illustrator of his story, that it was smashed to atoms.

RALPH ENDERBY.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

START THIS NEW SERIAL TO-DAY.

SUMMARY.

ANDREA DE MANCINI, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. Yvonne and her sister, Genevieve, who were the ladies who befriended de Luynes, arrive at the inn where the two men are stopping, and de Mancini is much taken with Genevieve. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his chateau.

CHAPTER VII. *(continued).*

To please Andrea was, however, of chief importance in his plans, and to that motive I owe it that he pressed me to remain a guest at the château. I declined the honor with the best grace I could command, determined that whilst Andrea remained at Canaples I would lodge at the *Lys de France* in Blois, independent and free to come or go as my fancy bade me. His invitation that I should at least dine at Canaples I accepted, but with the condition that he should repeat his invitation after he had heard something that I wished to tell him. He assented, with a puzzled look, and when presently Andrea repaired to his apartments, and we were alone, I began:

"You have doubtless received news, Monsieur, of a certain affair in which your son had recently the misfortune to be dangerously wounded?"

We were standing by the great marble fireplace, and Canaples was resting one of his feet upon the huge brass audirons. He made a gesture of impatience as I spoke.

"My son, sir, is a fool! A good-for-nothing fool! Oh, I have heard of this affair, a vulgar tavern brawl, the fifth in which his name has been involved and besmirched. I had news this morning by a courier dispatched me by my friend St. Simon, who imagines that I am deeply concerned in that young profligate. I learn that he is out of danger, and that in a month or so he will be about again and ready to disgrace the name of Canaples afresh. But there, sir; I crave your pardon for the interruption."

I bowed, and when in answer to my questions he told me that he was in ignorance of the details of the affair I spoke of, I set about laying those details before him. Beginning with the original provocation in the Palais Royal, and ending with the fight in the horse-market, I related the whole story to him, but in an impersonal manner, and keeping my own name out of my narrative. When I had done, Canaples muttered an oath of the days of the fourth Henry.

"*Ventre St. Gris!* Does the dog carry his audacity so far as to dare come betwixt me and my wishes, and to strive against them? He sought to kill Mancini, eh? Would to Heaven he had died by the hand of this fellow who shielded the lad!"

"Monsieur!" I cried, aghast at so unnatural an expression.

"Pah!" he cried harshly. "He is my son in name alone; filial he never was."

"Nevertheless, Monsieur, he is still your son, your heir."

"My heir? And what, pray, does he inherit? A title—a barren, landless title! By his shameful conduct he alienated the affection of his uncle, and his uncle has disinherited him in favour of Yvonne. 'Tis she who will be mistress of this château, with its acres of land reaching from here to Blois, and three times as far on the other side. My brother, sir, was the rich Canaples, the owner of all this, and by his testament I am his heir during my lifetime, the estates going to Yvonne at my death. So that you see I have naught to leave; but if I had, not a farthing should go to my worthless son."

He spread his thin hands before the blaze, and for a moment there was silence. Then I proceeded to tell him of the cabal which had been formed against Mancini, and of the part played by St. Auban. At the mention of that name he started as if I had stung him.

"What?" he thundered. "Is that ruffian also in the affair? Heavens! His motives are not far to seek. He is a suitor—an unfavored suitor—for the hand of Yvonne, that seemingly still hopes. But you have not told me, Monsieur, the name of this man who has stood betwixt Andrea and his assassins."

"Can you not guess, Monsieur?" quoth I, looking him

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squarely in the face. "Did you not hear Andrea call me, even now, his protector?"

"You? And with what motive, pray?"

"At first, as I have told you, because the Cardinal gave me no choice in the matter touching your son. Since then my motive has lain in my friendship for the boy. He has been kind and affectionate to one who has known little kindness or affection in life. I seek to repay him by advancing his interests and happiness. That, Monsieur, is why I am here to-day to shield him from St. Auban and his fellows should they appear again, as I believe they will."

The old man stood up and eyed me for a moment as steadily as his vacillating glance would permit him; then he held out his hand.

"I trust, Monsieur," he said, "that you will do me the honor to dine with us, and that whilst you are at Blois we shall see you at Canaples as often as it may please you to cross its threshold."

I took his hand, but without enthusiasm, for I understood that his words sprang from no warmth of heart for me, but merely from the fact that he beheld in me a likely ally to his designs of raising his daughter to the rank of duchess.

Eugène de Canaples may have been a good-for-nothing knave; still, methought, his character scarce justified the callous indifference manifested by this selfish, weak-minded old man towards his own son.

There was a knock at the door, and a lackey, the same Guilbert whom I had seen at Choisy in Mademoiselle's company, appeared with the announcement that the Chevalier was served.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FORESHADOW OF DISASTER.

IN the spacious dining salon of the Château de Canaples I found the two daughters of my host awaiting us, those same two ladies of the coach in Place Vendôme and of the hostelry at Choisy—the dark and stately icicle, Yvonne, and the fair, playful doll, Geneviève.

I bowed my best bow as the Chevalier presented me, and from the corner of my eye, with inward malice, I watched them as I did so. Geneviève curtsied with a puzzled air and a sidelong glance at her sister. Yvonne accorded me the faintest, the coldest inclination of the head, whilst her cheeks assumed a colour that was unwonted.

"We have met before I think, Monsieur," she said disdainfully.

"True, Mademoiselle—once," I answered, thinking only of the coach.

"Twice, Monsieur," she corrected; whereupon I recalled how she had surprised me with my arm about the waist of the inn-keeper's daughter, and had Heaven given me shame, I might have blushed. But if sweet Yvonne thought to bring Gaston de Luynes to task for profiting by the good things which God's Providence sent his way, she was led by vanity into a prodigious error.

"Twice indeed, Mademoiselle. But the service which you rendered me upon the first occasion was so present to my mind just now that it eclipsed the memory of our second meeting. I have ever since desired, Mademoiselle, that an opportunity might be mine wherein to thank you for the preservation of my life. I do so now, and at your service do I lay that life which you preserved, and which is therefore as much yours as mine."

Strive as I might I could not rid my tone of an ironical inflection. I was goaded to it by her attitude, by the scornful turn of her lip, and the disdainful glance of her grey eyes—she had her father's eyes, saving that her gaze was as steadfast as his was furtive.

"What is this, quoth Canaples. "You owe your life to my daughter? Pray tell me of it."

"With all my heart?" I made haste to answer before Mademoiselle could speak. "A week ago I disagreed upon a question of great delicacy with a certain gentleman who shall be nameless. The obvious result attended our disagreement, and we fought 'neath the eyes of a vast company of spectators. Right was on my side, and the gentleman hurt himself upon my sword. Well, sir, the crowd snarled at me as though it were my fault that this had so befallen, and I flouted the crowd in answer. They were a hundred opposed to one, and so confident did this circumstance render them of their superiority, that for once those whelps displayed sufficient valour to attack me. I fled; and as a coach chanced to come that way, I clutched at the window and hung there. Within the coach there were two ladies, and one of them, taking compassion upon me, invited me to enter, and thus rescued me. That lady, sir," I ended with a bow, "was Mademoiselle, your daughter."

In his eyes I read it that he had guessed the name of my nameless gentleman.

The ladies were struck dumb by my apparent effrontery. Yvonne at last recovered sufficiently to ask if my presence at the château arose from my being attached to M. de Mancini. Now, *attached* is an unpleasant word. A courtier is attached to the king; a soldier, to the army; there is humiliation in neither of these. But to a private gentleman a man may be only attached as his secretary, his valet, or, possibly, as his bravo. Therein lay the sting of her carefully chosen word.

"I am M. de Mancini's friend," I answered with simple dignity.

For all reply she raised her eyebrows in token of surprise; Canaples looked askance. I bit my lip, and an awkward silence followed, which luckily was quickly ended by the appearance of Andrea.

The ladies received him graciously, and a faint blush might—to searching eyes—have been perceived upon Geneviève's cheek.

There came a delicate exchange of compliments, after which we got to table, and for my part I did ample justice to the viands.

I sat beside Geneviève, and opposite Andrea, who occupied the place of the honored guest, at the host's right hand, with Yvonne beside him. Me it concerned little where I sat, since the repast was all that I could look for; not so the others. Andrea scowled at me because I was nearer to Geneviève than he, and Yvonne frowned at me for other reasons. By Geneviève I was utterly disregarded, and my endeavours to converse were sorely unsuccessful.

I clearly saw that Yvonne but awaited an opportunity to unmask me, and denounce me to her father as the man who had sought his son's life.

This opportunity, however, came not until the moment of my departure from the Château that evening. I was crossing the hall with the Chevalier de Canaples, and we had stopped for a moment to admire a piece of old chain armour of the days of the Crusaders. Andrea and Geneviève had preceded us, and passed out through the open doorway, whilst Yvonne lingered upon the threshold looking back.

"I trust M. de Luynes," said Canaples, as we moved towards her, "that you will remember my invitation, and that whilst you remain at Blois we shall see you here as often as you may be pleased to come; indeed, I trust that you will be a daily visitor."

Before I could utter a reply, "Father," exclaimed Mademoiselle, coming forward, "do you know to whom you are offering the hospitality of Canaples?"

"Why that question, child? To M. de Luynes, M. de Mancini's friend."

"And the would-be murderer of Eugène," she added fiercely.

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Canaples started.

"Surely such affairs are not for women to meddle with," he cried. "Moreover, M. de Luynes has already given me all details of the affair."

Her eyes grew very wide at that.

"He has told you? Yet you invite him hither?" she exclaimed.

"M. de Luynes has naught wherewith to reproach himself, nor have I. Those details which he has given me I may not impart to you; suffice it, however, that I am satisfied that his conduct could not have been other than it was, whereas that of my son reflects but little credit upon his name."

She stamped her foot; and her eyes, blazing with anger, passed from one to the other of us.

"And you—you believe this man's story?"

"Yvonne!"

"Possibly," I interposed coolly, "Mademoiselle may have received some false account of it that justifies her evident unbelief in what I may have told you."

It is not easy to give a lie unless you can prove it a lie. I made her realise this, and she bit her lip in vexation. "Gad! What a pretty viper I thought her at that moment!

"Let me add, Yvonne," said her father, "that M. de Luynes and I are old comrades in arms." Then turning to me, "My daughter, sir, is but a child, and therefore hasty to pass judgment upon matters beyond her understanding. Forget this foolish outburst, and remember only my assurance of an ever cordial welcome."

"With all my heart," I answered, after a moment's deliberation, during which I had argued that for once I must stifle pride if I would serve Andrea.

"Ough!" was all Mademoiselle's comment as she turned her back upon me. Nevertheless I bowed and flourished my beaver to her retreating figure.

Clearly Mademoiselle entertained for me exactly that degree of fondness which a pious nun may feel for the devil, and if I might draw conclusions from what evidences I had had of the strength of her character and the weakness of her father's, our sojourn at Blois promised to afford me little delectation. In fact, I foresaw many difficulties that might lead to disaster should our Paris friends appear upon the scene, a contingency this that seemed over-imminent.

It was not my wont, howbeit, to brood over the evils that the future might hold, and to this I owe it that I slept soundly that night in my room at the *Lys de France*

It was a pleasant enough chamber on the first floor, overlooking the street, and having an alcove attached to it which served for Michelot.

Next day I visited the Château de Canaples early in the afternoon. The weather was milder, and the glow

"Father," exclaimed Mademoiselle, coming forward, "do you know to whom you are offering the hospitality of Canaples?"

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of the sun heralded at last the near approach of spring, and brightened wondrously a landscape that had yesterday worn so forbidding a look.

This change it must have been that drew the ladies, and Andrea with them, to walk in the park, where I came upon them as I rode up. Their laughter rippled merrily, and they appeared upon the best of terms until they espied me. My advent was like a cloud that foretells a storm, and drove Mesdemoiselles away after they had accorded me a greeting that contained scant graciousness.

All unruffled by this act, from which I gathered that Yvonne the strong had tutored Geneviève the frail concerning me, I consigned my horse to a groom of the Château, and linked arms with Andréa.

"Well, boy," quoth I, "what progress?"

He smiled radiantly.

"My hopes are all surpassed. It exceeds belief that so poor a thing as I should find favour in her eyes—what eyes, Gaston!" He broke off with a sigh of rapture.

"You have certainly lost no time. And so already you know that you find favour, eh! How do you know that?"

"How? Need a man be told such things? There is an inexpressible——"

"My good Andrea, seek not to express it therefore," I interrupted hastily. "Let it suffice that the inexpressible exists and makes you happy. His Eminence will doubtless share your joy. Have you written to him?"

The mirth faded from the lad's face at the words, as the blossom fades 'neath the blighting touch of frost. What he said was so undutiful from a nephew touching his uncle, particularly when that uncle is a prelate, that I refrain from penning it.

We were joined just then by the Chevalier, and together we strolled round to the rose-garden, now, alas! naught but black and naked bushes, and down to the edge of the Loire, yellow and swollen by the recent rains.

"How lovely must be this place in summer!" I mused, looking across the water towards Chambord. "And, Gad," I cried, suddenly changing my meditations, "what an ideal fencing ground is this even turf!"

"The swordsman's instinct," laughed Canaples.

And with that our talk shifted to swords, swordsmen, and swordplay, until I suggested to Andrea that he should resume his practice, whereupon the Chevalier offered to set a room at our disposal.

"Nay, if you will pardon me, Monsieur, 'tis not a room we want," I answered. "A room is well enough at the outset, but it is the common error of fencing-masters to continue their tutoring on a wooden floor. It results from this that when the neophyte handles a real sword and defends his life upon the turf, the ground has a new feeling; its elasticity or even its slipperiness discomposes him and set him at a disadvantage."

He agreed with me, whilst Andrea expressed a wish to try the turf. Foils were brought, and we whiled away the best part of half-an-hour. In the end, the Chevalier, who had watched my play intently, offered to try a bout with me. And so amazed was he with the result, that he had not done talking of it when I left Canaples a few hours later, a homage this that earned me some more than ordinarily unfriendly glances from Yvonne. No doubt, since the accomplishment was mine, it became in her eyes characteristic of a bully and a ruffler.

During the week that followed, I visited the Château with regularity, and with equal regularity did Andrea receive his fencing lessons. The object of his presence at Canaples, however, was being frustrated more and more each day, so far as the Cardinal and the Chevalier were concerned.

He raved to me of Geneviève, the one perfect woman in all the world, and brought into it by a kind Providence for his own particular delectation. In truth, love is like a rabid dog—whom it bites it renders mad; so open grew his wooing, and so ardent that one evening I thought well to take him aside and caution him.

"My dear Andrea," said I, "if you will love Geneviève, you will, and there's an end of it. But if you would not have the Chevalier pack you back to Paris and the anger of my Lord Cardinal, be circumspect, and, at least when M. de Canaples is by, divide your homage equally betwixt the two. 'Twere well if you dissembled even a slight preference for Yvonne; she will not be misled by it, seeing how unmistakable at all other seasons must be your wooing of Geneviève."

He was forced to avow the wisdom of my counsel, and to be guided by it.

Nevertheless I rode back to my hostelry in no pleasant frame of mind. It was more than likely that a short shrift and a length of hemp would be the acknowledgment I should anon receive from Mazarin for my participation in the miscarriage of his desires.

I felt that disaster was on the wing. Call it a premonition, call it what you will. I know but this: that as I rode into the courtyard of the *Lys de France* at dusk, the first man my eyes alighted on was the Marquis César de St. Auban and, in conversation with him, six of the most arrant looking ruffians that ever came out of Paris.

CHAPTER IX.

Of how a Whip Proved a Better Argument than a Tongue.

"I CRAVE Monsieur's pardon, but there is a gentleman below who desires to speak with you immediately."

"How does this gentleman call himself, M. l'Hôte?"

"M. le Marquis de St. Auban," answered the landlord, still standing in the doorway.

It wanted an hour or so to noon on the day following that of St. Auban's arrival at Blois, and I was on the point of setting out for the Château on an errand of warning.

It occurred to me to refuse to see the Marquis; but remembering betimes that from your enemy's speech you may sometimes learn where to look for his next attack, I thought better of it and bade my host admit him.

I strode over to the fire, and stirring the burning logs, I put my back to the blaze and waited.

Steps sounded on the stairs; there was the shuffling of the landlord's slippered feet, and the firm tread of my visitor, accompanied by the jingle of spurs and the clank of his scabbard as it struck the balustrade. Then my door was again opened, and St. Auban, as superbly dressed as ever, was admitted.

We bowed formally, as men bow who are about to cross swords, and whilst I waited for him to speak, I noted that his face was pale and bore the impress of suppressed anger.

"So, M. de Luynes, again we meet."

"By your seeking, M. le Marquis."

"You are not polite."

"You are not opportune."

He smiled dangerously.

"I learn, Monsieur, that you are a daily visitor at the Château de Canaples."

"Well, sir, what of it?"

"This—I have been to Canaples this morning, and knowing that you will learn anon, from that old dotard, what passed between us, I prefer that you shall hear it first from me."

I bowed to conceal a smile.

"Thanks to you, M. de Luynes, I was ordered from the house. I—César de St. Auban—have been ordered from the house of a provincial upstart, thanks to the calumnies which you poured into his ears."

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"Calumnies! Was that the word?"

"I choose the word that suits me best," he answered, and the rage that was in him at the affront he had suffered at the hands of the Chevalier de Canaples was fast rising to the surface. "I warned you at Choisy of what would befall. Your opposition and your alliance with M. de Mancini are futile. You think to have gained a victory by winning over to your side an old fool who will sacrifice his honour to see his daughter a duchess; but I tell you, sir——"

"That you hope to see her a marchioness," I put in calmly. "You see, M. de St. Auban, I have learnt something since I came to Blois."

He grew livid with passion.

"You shall learn more ere you quit it, you meddler! You shall be taught to keep that long nose of yours out of matters that concern you not."

I laughed. "Loud threats!" I answered jeeringly.

"Never fear," he cried; "there is more to follow. To your cost shall you learn it. By Gad, sir, do you think that I am to suffer a Sicilian adventurer and a broken tavern ruffler to interfere with my designs?"

Still I kept my temper.

"So," I said in a bantering tone, "you confess that you have designs. Good! But what says the lady, eh? I am told that she is not outrageously enamoured of you; for all your beauty."

Beside himself with passion, his hand sought his sword. But the gesture was spasmodic.

"Knave!" he snarled.

"Knave to me? Have a care, St. Auban; or I'll find you a shroud for a wedding garment."

"Knave!" he repeated with a snarl. "What price are you paid by that boy?"

"By Heaven, St. Auban! You shall answer for this."

"Answer for it? To you!" And he laughed harshly. "You are mad, my master. When did a St. Auban cross swords with a man of your stamp?"

"M. le Marquis," I said, with a calmness that came of a stupendous effort, "at Choisy you sought my friendship with high-sounding talk of principles that opposed you to the proposed alliance 'twixt the houses of Mancini and Canaples. Since then I have learnt that your motives were purely personal. From my discovery I hold you to be a liar."

"Monsieur!"

"I have not yet done. You refuse to cross swords with me on the pretext that you do not fight men of my stamp. I am no saint, sir, I confess. But my sins cannot wash out my name—the name of a family accounted as good as that of St. Auban, and one from which a constable of France has sprung, whereas yours has never yet bred aught but profligates and debauchees. You are little better than I am, Marquis; indeed, you do many things that I would not do, that I have never done. For instance, whilst refusing to cross blades with me, who am a soldier, and a man of the sword, you seek to pick a fight with a beardless boy who hardly knows the use of a rapier, and who, wittingly at least, has done you no wrong. Now, my master, you may call me profligate, ruffler, gamester, duellist—what you will; but there are two viler things you cannot dub me, and which, methinks, I have proven you to be—liar and craven."

And as I spoke the burning words I stood close up to him and tapped his breast as if to drive the epithets into his very heart.

"Now, master craven," I shouted, "will that make you change your mind?"

Rage he felt indeed, and his distorted countenance was a sight fearful to behold.

"Now, my master," I added, setting my arms akimbo, and laughing brutally in his face, "will you fight?"

For a moment he wavered, and surely methought that I had drawn him. Then, "No," he cried passionately. "I will not do dishonour to my sword." And turning, he made for the door, leaving me baffled.

"Go, sir," I shouted, "but fame shall stalk fast behind you. Liar and craven will I dub you throughout the whole of France."

He stopped 'neath the lintel, and faced me again.

"Fool!" he sneered. "You'll need dispatch to spread my fame so far. By this time to-morrow you'll be arrested. In three days you'll be in the Bastille, and there shall you lie until you rot."

"Loud threats again!" I laughed, hoping by the taunt to learn more.

"Loud, perchance, but not empty. Learn that the Cardinal has knowledge of your association with Mancini, and means to separate you. An officer of the guards is on his way to Blois. He is at Meung by now. He bears a warrant for your arrest, and delivery to the governor of the Bastille. Thereafter none may say what will betide." And with a coarse burst of laughter he left me, banging the door as he passed out.

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For a moment I stood there stricken by his parting words. He had sought to wound me and in this he had succeeded. But at what cost to himself? In his blind rage, the fool had shown me that which he should have zealously concealed, and what to him was but a stinging threat, was to me a timely warning. I saw the necessity for immediate action. Two things must I do—kill St. Auban first, then fly the Cardinal's warrant as best I could. I cast about me for means to carry out the first of these intentions. My eye fell upon my riding-whip lying on a chair close to my hand, and the sight of it brought me the idea I sought. Seizing it I bounded out of the room and down the stairs three steps at a time.

Along the corridor I sped, and into the common-room, which at the moment was tolerably full. As I entered by one door, the Marquis was within three paces of the other, leading to the courtyard.

My whip in the air, I sprang after him; and he, hearing the rush of my onslaught, turned, then uttered a cry of pain, as I brought the lash caressingly about his shoulders.

"Now, master craven," I shouted, "will that change your mind?"

With an almost inarticulate cry he sought to draw there and then; but those about flung themselves upon us, and held us apart—I passive and unresisting, the Marquis bellowing, struggling, and foaming at the mouth.

"To meet you now would be to murder you, Marquis," I said coolly. "Send your friends to me to appoint the time."

"So be it," he cried, his eyes blazing with a hate unspeakable. "At eight to-morrow morning I shall await you on the green behind the castle of Blois."

"At eight o'clock I shall be there," I answered. "And now, gentlemen, if you will unhand me, I will return to my apartments."

They let me go, but with many a growl and angry look, for in their eyes I was no more than a coarse aggressor, while their sympathy was all for St. Auban.

(To be continued.)

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Quite Willing to Leave.

A GOVERNOR of a prison was inspecting the convicts, and during the inspection he remarked to one of them: "See here, man, you are not doing this right, you know; that sort of thing will never do." The convict calmly laid down his tools and said: "Guv'nor, I'm willing to be turned off and discharged if my work don't suit. I never applied for this job or the situation, and if my work ain't satisfactory, I'm willing to go."

Anxious to Please.

HE was a new clerk in a big retail establishment, and was anxious to make a record as a salesman. When he had been in the shop a few days a young lady came in and inquired, "Can you let me look at some safety bicycles?" He turned away to get information about the stock, and, returning, said, with a winsome smile, "I am very sorry, miss, we're out of safety bicycles; but we have some splendid safety matches."

The Natural Thing.

THE clouds were gathering threateningly over the hills. There was an ominous silence in the air, and all the evidence pointed to the likelihood of a terrible thunderstorm occurring. She had just refused his offer of marriage; but, now that danger threatened, she showed she valued his protection by the way she nestled up to him. "I'm afraid of the lightning," she murmured. "No wonder," sighed the despairing adorer, "when your heart is made of steel."

Something to Say.

IN a Western police court a small boy was about to receive sentence for some petty crime. It was evidently his first offence, and he was not familiar with court usages. When the magistrate asked the usual question before pronouncing sentence, he varied the form a little—carelessly, or perhaps as a slight relief to its monotony. "Well, my boy, have you anything you can say to the Bench?" "Yes, sir," said the frightened boy. "You have!" The case had been very clear against the prisoner. "Speak up, then, and let us hear it." To the amazement of everyone who was present, the little fellow began:

"The boy stood on the burning deck.
Whence all but he had fled!"

So keen was the appreciation of the ludicrous in the listeners that the ingenious youth was allowed to complete the poem without interruption.

Wouldn't be Mean.

"WHAT do you charge by the hour?" quoth a raw Scot, the other day, to a cabby, who was loitering near Charing Cross. "Half-a-crown," said the man. The Scot jumped in and asked to be driven to the Admiralty, where he had business. At the Admiralty the hall porter informed him that the official whom he wished to see was not in; so the visitor from the North desired to be taken back to Charing Cross. As he descended he looked at his watch. The trip had occupied seven minutes. "Ah!" he said, "we were only gone seven minutes, but we'll call it ten. Ten minutes at half-a-crown an hour is fivepence. We'll call it sixpence. I don't wish to be mean." The cabman saw matters in a different light, and a crowd assembled. There were hot words on both sides, and a policeman interfered; but, as the canny one could not be convinced that he had acted in any but the most generous manner, the matter had ultimately to be taken to the police court.

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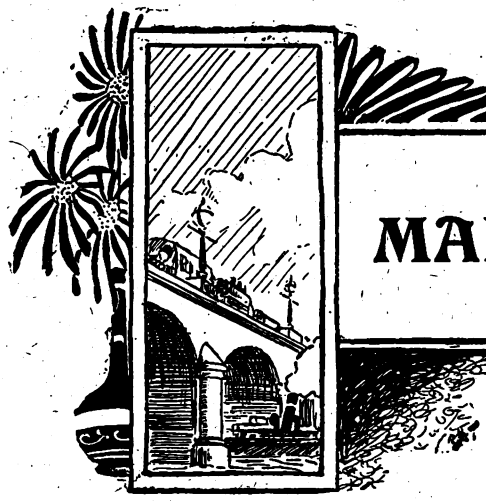

MARCO THE JESTER.

THE clown, brave in his warpaint, and waiting his cue, seemed to pale under the chalk and bismuth—a spasmodic shiver, also, appearing to shake him from head to foot.

Then a shrill whistle.

"Marco!" was shouted by a brazen-throated boy; his voice echoing through the stables and dressing-tents in the neighbourhood of the ring.

"Marco! Marco!" yelled the thousand expectantly delighted people, the roar of welcome, as the object of it all strolled into the arena, making the vast canvas rock again, and tremble to its very peg-cords.

And Marco was evidently himself again, for he never so much as winked an eyelid. This air of assumed stolid indifference but added, however, to the general satisfaction and hilarity, it being the main characteristic of the famous droll's humour.

In private life a silent, reserved man, it was curious to note that his chief professional successes seemed to have been won by something peculiarly akin to the same method.

His quips, his queer outlandish antics were all uttered with a quiet, easy gravity, irresistibly funny.

Time was when he and the bright side of life had been better, the best of friends; and, as thereby hangs a tale, it will be as well to hark back a matter of eight years or more, in order to give it due and proper telling.

* * * *

Joshua Alden's father was an ironmaster in a large way of business in Smethwick, near Birmingham. Come of an old Quaker stock, he seemed to have inherited (superficially, at any rate) a double portion of the spirit—the bigoted side of it—of the "Friends'" founder and patron saint. Keen, and as some declared, suspiciously unscrupulous in his business dealings, he presented to the world a front, stern and uncompromising to a degree.

Having but one child, a son, him he brought up in the strictest accord with his own particular views, so that the lad, and later on the man, came to regard his father in the light of a domestic nuisance and despot, to be ignored or defied as opportunity offered.

Follow his father's calling he would not, and so it was that when old Caleb heard, upon good authority, that his son, whose habits and mode of life had for long been a source of trouble to him, was infatuated with a "belle-of-the-ring;" and that a marriage between them was likely to ensue, he was furious, and spoke hard things.

Joshua, not to be behindhand in the fight for the sceptre, recriminated with many a bitter word, reproaching his father with having, by hypocritical restriction and enforcements, so marred his son's life, as to make of it that which should for ever be a crying witness against him in his parental character.

Seeing that nothing was to be looked for from his father, Joshua resolved to turn the gift of "fooling" (for gift it is), for which, as an amateur he had a certain reputation, to practical account.

Saroni's Circus, the best on the road, and of which Estelle Dubois (professionally known as "L'Estelle") was the queen, the bright particular star, was still in the neighbourhood. Every year, for a season of several months, it occupied a large wooden building on the east side of the town, using the place also as convenient winter quarters.

With Saroni himself Joshua had a more than passing acquaintance—influence even—of a sort. To him, therefore, he applied for employment as a mimic in the ring.

"You!" said the showman, "What for you want to 'clown'? A rich man—you! You fool me—but, yes?"

"Never was more serious in my life," replied the other. "Will you see what I can do? Yes or no!"

"Well, I try you! Come to-morrow morning for rehearsal, then at night we will see! We will see!"

The trial "show," triumphantly successful, resulted in a five years' engagement.

That the presence in the company of Estelle Dubois largely influenced Joshua's determination, there can be no doubt. It could not well be otherwise, seeing how he loved her.

Her "turn," or in ring parlance, her "act," consisted in a combination of bare-backed equilibristic horsemanship, in which, by reason of her neatness of execution, and dainty gracefulness of style, she was unsurpassed, while her personal beauty was as that of a fairy-queen, intensified a hundred times.

There was not a man belonging to the circus but worshipped her, but without avail. Smiles, indeed, had she for all, but these though, as the recipients fondly imagined, kindly meant, were not in any sense "love" smiles, but were part of her professional paraphernalia.

Young Joshua, or as he now styled himself, "Marco,

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the jester," never attempted to soften his father in any way, when once he had severed himself from his home.

Had he been more a man of the world, he would certainly have noticed that Estelle cooled a little in her manner towards him, when it was clear that his chances as heir to a wealthy man were no longer of any value.

But he was of so frankly unsuspicious a nature, that to believe her capable of such a thought concerning him and his prospects never once entered his head.

In the company was a gymnast, a Frenchman, Henri Bleuse, by name. This man Joshua from the very first instinctively disliked. Bleuse, too, soon made it apparent in more ways than one, that the new clown was in no wise a favourite of his. Though there was not the slightest indication, either of word or of manner, that the foreigner entertained for Estelle anything beyond the feeling of admiration common to every man in the troupe, a little incident that occurred a few weeks after Joshua joined, rendered the latter uneasy and anxious.

It was very simple.

One evening, during the performance, and while Marco was standing in the shadow of the curtain waiting his entry, he heard voices the other side of the canvas.

"I am sick to death of it—me!"

Marco started, the speaker was Estelle. Then he listened intently.

"*Bien!* So am I! But patience, patience, and—then—*contente.*"

"Ah! So you say always! But no, it comes—never!"

"I tell you it will come, *petite*! It will come! One little week, and—pouf! the man will speak, and you will laugh!"

"Shall I? I do not think so; but have your way. Hush! *Allez!* they call me!"

Joshua heard no more. In another moment a vision of white tulle flashed past him, and bounded into the ring. At the same instant almost, Bleuse, the gymnast, strolled up to where the droll stood, and tapped him playfully on the shoulder.

"Ah! M'sieu Marco! It is the beautiful one! Eh?"

For the life of him Joshua could not answer the man; and as his own name now echoed loudly, he walked slowly out on to the stage and gravely saluted the master of the ring.

That night, after the "show," Joshua determined to put his hopes to the test, and ask Estelle to be his wife. But, somehow, she contrived to evade giving him the opportunity. Try as he would she eluded him.

Then, the word was passed for the Continental tour. This was always Saroni's rich harvest-time, and preparations went on apace for the transference of everything and everybody to French soil.

They were to open in Compiègne (beloved of the third Bonaparte, the Man of Destiny); the first point of a triumphal progress, of which laughter-loving Vienna should be the end and crown.

On the eve of departure from England, Joshua succeeded in capturing Estelle for a brief moment. He told her that his private means were now exhausted; that there was no prospect of replenishment from his father's purse, and that thenceforward he must depend for support upon his professional earnings.

There was just the slightest possible shade of disappointment visible in her eyes, in the very smallest, almost imperceptible contraction of her pretty brows. But Joshua was in the mood rather to doubt his own senses than the object of his love. Still, he could not quite put the troublous thought away from him that something untoward (what, he knew not), was in the air.

He had loaded her in the shape of presents with the best that money could buy, while the money lasted, but now—well—there was an end to luxury and unlimited *largesse*. Hard, stern times, and the loveless son, the homeless, disinherited wanderer looked hungrily for a sympathetic response from the one into whose keeping he had surrendered his very self—his very soul!

She listened to him in that light-hearted way of hers that always had the power to hypnotise him, and to make of him an only too willing slave.

"When shall it be?—say, Estelle! When shall it be? Have pity on me! for suspense and the misery of hope deferred is torturing me beyond my power to bear!"

A light touch on his arm with the fan she always carried; a light, tinkling laugh, a few merry words in rapid French—words utterly unintelligible to the average Englishman—and she was gone.

Compiègne besieged and conquered, Saroni's combination departed for the sunny south within a week, pitching in the near vicinity of Marseilles.

Beneath the blue skies of southern France Joshua forgot, or seemed to forget, the past in the present, and yielded himself to the glorious influence of warmth, sunshine, and the perfumed air of Europe's wonder-garden.

On the third day of their arrival in the city, and there being, for some reason, no day performance, Joshua started for a ramble through the more ancient parts of the quaint old seaport.

At mid-day he entered a café on the main wharf, ordered, in his best French, a frugal meal, and looked curiously about him.

It was a fairly large place of the third-rate sort, most of the tables being unoccupied.

Near where he had planted himself, however, there was seated a party of four, three men and a woman.

From certain time-honoured indications of dress and demeanour; as, too, from certain becks, nods, smiles, and whispered confidences of the garrulous *garçon*, it was clear that it was a wedding feast, and that the morning's deed was being celebrated in the noontide cup.

The clown was hidden to a great extent from the view of the feasters by a large palm, but could distinctly see the faces of two of the quartette; both being unknown to him.

The other pair, one being the woman, had their backs to Joshua, and he, the place being dark and gloomy, could not form any accurate judgment as to their personal appearance.

Yet there was something strangely familiar to him in the contour and general air of both of them.

With many loud "here's to you's," did the guests at the little banquet pledge the healths of the evident bride and groom, and all this amidst much laughter and volubility.

Then the woman's voice made the listener's ears to tingle, and his heart to beat, for *he knew it.*

"Ah, but yes! He is the silly fool!—the what you call—moth—eh! Innocent? Yes! Not worth that, this good M'sieu Josué Olten! Non!" and the speaker sharply snapped her fingers, breaking out into a silvery laugh of derision.

Yes, he knew her! It was she—Estelle!—and her companion—her new-made husband, was Bleuse, the gymnast! He saw it all now

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The gist of that which he heard was that he had been fooled—miserably fooled! The two, Estelle Dubois, and Henri Bleuse, had, all through the piece, been using him as a profitable orange, which, now that it was dry and nothing but peel, they had thrown down and trodden underfoot.

It seemed that they had agreed to keep secret the fact of their own engagement in order that they might, by means of the woman's wiles, the more surely draw the son of a notoriously rich man, into the net of their scheme of plunder.

Now that their victim had, perforce, disgorged his last penny, the farce, so far as he was concerned, was at an end; the jest, a sorry one, was played out, and the dupe was to be promptly dropped.

How, Joshua could not quite make out; he only knew that it was to be as soon as possible.

Then, he reflected that the end would probably be attained by means of a quarrel to be fixed upon him by the man.

If that were so, why he, Joshua, would be the first in the field.

Always, as we have seen, of a calm, impassive nature (save and except with regard to his love), he rose leisurely from his seat behind the palm, and walked across to where sat the merrymakers, all unconscious of his presence in their midst.

Taking up a full glass of wine from off the table, that stood in front of Bleuse, the clown dashed it deliberately in the gymnast's face.

Noise there was, and clamour, aided by a woman's shrieks, enough to waken the dead.

The *garcon*, apprehending trouble, closed the outer door, and besought the parties to depart peacefully, and arrange their quarrel elsewhere.

This had the effect of bringing matters to a conclusion.

In France it is yet possible, as everybody knows, to settle "affairs of honour" with sword or pistol, without much risk of incurring punishment. A challenge, therefore, on the part of Bleuse, was but a natural consequence, the Frenchman having, as the insulted, the option of choice of weapons, chose the sword.

Joshua, in the old days, had been reputed a good swordsman, beyond the average, he having gained expertness with foil and basket-hilt under the eye of a renowned master of fence.

They met in a quiet spot, just outside the city, and there, in the presence of two of their comrades, Joshua ran his antagonist through the body at the third pass.

It was but the work of a couple of minutes, hardly that.

Within the hour the survivor was safe on board a steamer, and bound for the Thames.

It took all his ready money, but then it meant freedom and perhaps even more than that.

* * * * *

It is some years now since it all happened, but although Marco, the droll, is at the summit of his profession, and rides upon the topmost crest of popular favour, he is a man out of whom the heart has been taken, for he lives as one quite indifferent to the future, in that it can never efface the past.

* * * * *

A short while since the one missing thread in the miserably tangled skein was supplied him unexpectedly.

Said his informant: "Your father, convinced that you were in every way outside the pale of Quaker sanctity (as he conceived it), contracted a violent and unnatural animus towards you. This feeling led him to secretly bribe the woman to lure you on to your own undoing, and in order that he might the more feasibly disinherit you. That, when the truth should out, your heart might be unmercifully wrung, he cared not; rather indeed did he glory in your surely coming misery."

"And this man was my father!" said Joshua. "God forgive him!"

* * * * *

He never again saw Estelle Bleuse, *nee* Dubois, although a whisper went the round of the profession that she had been seen, under another name, in Buenos Ayres, a queen as ever, the world at her feet. R. E.

THE BROKEN CHAIR.

GIACOMO went rapidly up the stairs to the fifth floor, and when he had reached the last landing, on which two doors opened, one at the right, and the other at the left he paused for a moment, drew a key from his pocket, and for a long time regarded the left-hand door, heaved a deep sigh, and then opened the door on the right.

As he stepped over the threshold he turned his h ad quickly and again gazed longingly at the other door, gave a second sigh, and finally stepped inside. On entering his little room, he removed his overcoat, took a chair, placed it beside the wall, seated himself thereon astride, lighted a cigarette and remained thus, watching the clouds of smoke that ascended to the ceiling, every few minutes placing his ear against the wall.

Suddenly, his face, hitherto clouded, assumed an expression of joy. Some one was moving about in the other room.

"She has come home," murmured the young man, and, in fact, a sound of chairs and dishes could now be heard.

"She is preparing supper," again murmured Giacomo, and, leaning his head against the wall, he tried to catch every movement of his neighbour, for, though he could not see her, he was happy in feeling that she was there, and in thus being able to live next door to her.

Poor Giacomo! He feared that he should never again behold her, and this was indeed a great grief to him. At one time he had been accustomed to see her often, for he used to arrange to meet her on the stairs, and there he was wont to await her coming for hours, and on seeing her approach at a distance of hastily ascending a few steps in order to give her time to arrive, when he would go slowly down stairs, feigning to meet her by chance.

Her name was Carlotta. She supported herself by doing embroidery, going out early every morning and returning to her home in the evening.

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She had come to live in this house the preceding year. At first he had only thought of her as a pretty girl, and no more. Then, by degrees, living there thus beside her, he had ended by always thinking of her and by loving her with his whole heart. If she had only been willing to say a word or two to him, or if he had only had the courage to speak, his declaration would have been brief, but conclusive—thus, for instance:

"Signorina, I love you. Will you be my wife?"

But then, alas, in order to offer his hand to the girl it was necessary that the hand should contain something, and Giacomo, unfortunately, had nothing. He was a painter whose canvases found no purchasers, so that the poor boy had been compelled to sell his furniture in order to pay his rent. Nothing now remained save his bed and this wretched, shabby old cane chair, that was only held together by a miracle and on which he was now seated smoking, and lending an ear to the slightest sound that proceeded from the other side of the wall.

Sometimes when seated as usual, astride his chair, he would close his eyes and give free rein to his imagination.

"Who knows of what she may now be thinking?" he would ask himself. "Who knows but that she may even suspect that I am here beside her? Ah, if she only knew how I loved her!" And the temptation would then seize him to make some disturbance in order to attract the girl's attention, such as the discharge of a weapon like some make-believe assassin, who fires a revolver loaded with powder at a passing prince simply that people may talk about him. But the fear of displeasing her restrained him, and he preferred that she should never know that he loved her rather than to be sure that she would never care for him.

Then he fell to building castles in the air.

"It is impossible," thought he, "that she should never think of me at all. She knows that there is such a person as myself; that I live directly adjoining her. When she comes home she can see that there is a light in my room through the door that I leave ajar. Like all women she must have some curiosity and at times must surely ask herself what I am doing, and why I never go out. Perhaps she has already noticed me, notwithstanding my awkwardness, possibly precisely on that account. She may even have divined that I love her. She may expect me to declare myself, and, seeing that I dare not do so, perhaps she will make the first advances. But how can I manage that she shall not delay doing so?"

And Giacomo, still astride his chair, continued his reflections. Suppose he were to write her a letter and push it under the door? He had often thought of doing so. But, then, would the girl have read it? And, even admitting that she had, would not the very first words have wounded her? Should he try and get her to speak of some one? But of whom, then? They had no friend in common. No, no. All these means were decidedly objectionable or impossible. There was nothing to be done but to wait. But, oh, how long would he have to do so?

Meanwhile it was growing late, and Carlotta, in her little room, was making the needle fly rapidly. She had decided to finish the piece of work begun that night, and in order not to fall asleep she was singing.

Giacomo naturally sat up likewise, still in the same position, listening, and mechanically keeping time with his body to the measure of the melody. When the tune was a slow one, all went well, but when it grew quicker his motions became dangerous, for the poor trembling chair was constrained to execute gymnastics far beyond its strength.

After awhile the girl began to grow weary, and the grand arias which she had been singing from the first to the last notes were followed by fragments of songs interrupted now and again, while the tones of her voice grew lower and sweeter, and to cavatinas succeeded "romances" and "reveries."

Giacomo, still seated upon his chair, was not getting drowsy, but continued to stay there, listening to the songs as in a sort of dream, mechanically keeping time by the swaying of his body to the measure of the music.

Carlotta also was falling asleep, but then decided not to go to bed till her work was quite finished, and so made a supreme effort to shake off the drowsiness that was overpowering her, and in order to do so, suddenly began lustily to sing a waltz. Giacomo was now dreaming. Of course he was dreaming of waltzing, and so moved himself about, keeping time to the music, but to this final proof of its strength the chair refused to respond and, with a fearful screeching sound, gave way, dragging down in its fall the unfortunate cavalier.

This caused such a terrific crash that Carlotta, overcome with fright, uttered a loud cry, but Giacomo was silent, for the poor fellow in falling had struck his head against the bed, and now lay stretched upon the floor in a deep swoon.

When he finally regained consciousness, he found himself lying on his bed with his head bandaged, and there beside him, watching over him while embroidering, and seated upon a chair that was neither old nor shabby he beheld a lovely young girl, and whom should it be but Carlotta!

"How is this?" he exclaimed. "You here, signorina?"

"Yes, signor. Last night after the commotion caused by your fall, not hearing any further sound, I feared that some misfortune had befallen you, and so came here and found you in a faint. Now, however, you are much better, and in a few days you will be quite yourself again. But tell me, how in the world did you ever happen to fall off your chair in so strange a manner?"

Giacomo did not reply, and blushed deeply. But women are quick to divine the sentiments that they inspire, and Carlotta was not long in reading the young man's heart.

And now Giacomo and Carlotta are husband and wife, and as happy as it is possible to be in this world. Carlotta is no longer compelled to embroider. The sale of some of her husband's pictures, for he is now beginning to be known, is sufficient to provide for them both. They are living in a simple but pretty apartment, tastefully furnished, and are held in high esteem by all who know them.

One thing, however, causes their friends to wonder. In the place of honour, in the centre of their tiny drawing room, there stands a great ugly cane chair which is in so rickety a condition that in order to maintain it in an upright position Carlotta has been compelled to bind it together with cords.

A. TALIAN.

KIND PARTY: "Why are you crying like that, my little boy?" Little Boy: "'Cause it's the only way I know how."

"PRISONER, you are charged with being drunk and disorderly. Are you guilty, or not guilty?" "That's what you're paid to find out; I ain't going to help yer."

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How Jones Broke Whales to Harness.

"It is strange," said Jones reflectively, as he puffed vigorously at his cigar, "that Jackson Peters never tells us of any more of his ideas for inventions. The last thing was his ingenious notion of putting hinges on the trunks of fruit trees, so that in case of high wind they could be turned down. You never perfected that plan, did you, Jackson?" And Jones turned towards the young man with great apparent interest.

"The thing could be done," answered Peters, as if Jones had cast doubts on its practicability. "And it would be a great boon to fruit-growers in draughty parts of the country. Lately I've been wondering that more progress is not made by inventors in the line of submarine war-boats."

"Possibly you could get some marine hints from an account of my experience with the Leviathan Towing and Transportation Line, which I worked in the late eighties," admitted Jones. "You remember the line, Robinson?"

Robinson answered "Yes," without a blush.

"One night after I went to bed," continued Jones, "it occurred to me that, though hundreds of land animals are of use to man while living, not one of the sea animals has ever been put to any practical use till dead. It seemed probable that the most useful purpose to which living land animals were put by man was as draught animals, of which we may take the horse and the ox as examples. Why were not the animals of the sea used for draught purposes? I became so excited that I lay awake all night thinking about it. The result was the Leviathan Towing and Transportation Line.

"During all my life to think has been to act, therefore you need not be surprised to know that in a month I had left Liverpool on a chartered whaling steamer, looking for whales. I had decided that the whale was the animal most suited to my purpose. Off the coast of Labrador we sighted a large school of whales. Fortunately it was a graded school, so to say, consisting of true whales, Greenland whales, humpbacked whales, fin-backed whales, spermaceti whales, and so forth.

"We had considerable trouble in driving them at first, but I rigged up a fog-horn with a reed, so it would say 'shoo,' and they soon learnt what it meant, and we worked them along down the coast by easy stages. A good many of the more skittish ran back, and I thought at one time that I might have to send a tug ahead with a herring on the end of a stick to coax them; but we finally got them down to Gardiner's Bay, Long Island, and grounded them in the shallow water.

"Of course it has always been self-evident that the whale would make a splendid driving animal if he could be controlled. The most important and hardest thing was clearly to keep him from diving. A careful study showed me that the whale could not dive without first putting his head down; therefore, all that was needed was a bearing rein sufficiently strong to restrain him in that respect.

"I selected a fine whale about seventy-five feet long, which I had noticed was a good traveller, and proceeded to harness him. I put a bit about four inches in diameter in his mouth, with ten-foot check rings on each side. From this bit I ran a hawser along his back, and round his tail, where the flukes are joined to the body. I then put on a large collar, attached a mud barge by four-inch wire cables, and turned him towards deep water for a trial spin.

"Naturally, of course, that whale did not readily take to harness. He reared up, rolled over, charged ahead, struck out fiercely with his flukes, blew a stream of water like an artesian well, and otherwise misbehaved himself. His efforts to dive were something startling, but the bearing-rein held, and he finally gave it up.

"I had wire-cable reins connected with the wheel in the pilot-house, and stood there and guided him, occasionally touching him up with a bamboo fishing-rod. In two hours I could manage him fairly well, and in a week he was fully broken, though he always remained hard-mouthed, and was never what you might call a lady's whale.

"I then went on and broke the others of the school for harness. I found the Greenlands made the best draught animals, and I used them in towing lighters, canal boats, barges, and so forth, either driving them single, or two abreast. The fin-backs I soon discovered were the best driving beasts, being light, active and stylish.

"I took a young and quick-stroke fin-back for my own private use, and used him on my yacht. He was a free goer, and a little inclined to fight shy at lighthouses and promontories, but gentle as a kitten. He could throw spray in the face of any other whale along the coast. He was better on a smooth track, but did not make a bad showing outside, where the track was heavy. He was always rather nervous about being harnessed, and it usually took two men to get him into the shafts.

"I gave up the business on account of the continued opposition of the steamboat people. They made various ridiculous charges, and got the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals excited. The absurd cry was set up that my bearing reins were cruel, and that I was docking the flukes of my driving animals. They also got a law enacted requiring me to stop every fifty miles and feed my whales out of a nose-bag made from a balloon—something utterly uncalled for.

"The charge of fast driving was likewise made against me, and a law was passed prohibiting a speed of above forty-five miles an hour. Finally I gave the whole scheme up and turned my whales loose. I am essentially a man of peace, esteeming quietude above all things. Strife is as distasteful to me as an untruth.

"The whales lapsed into barbarism, but did not utterly forget their cunning. Two years later, when the barque *Curlew* tried to take my fin-back off the coast of Greenland, he dodged the harpoon, took it in his mouth like a tooth-pick, and punched the boats so full of holes with it that they looked like nutmeg-graters." O. P. W.

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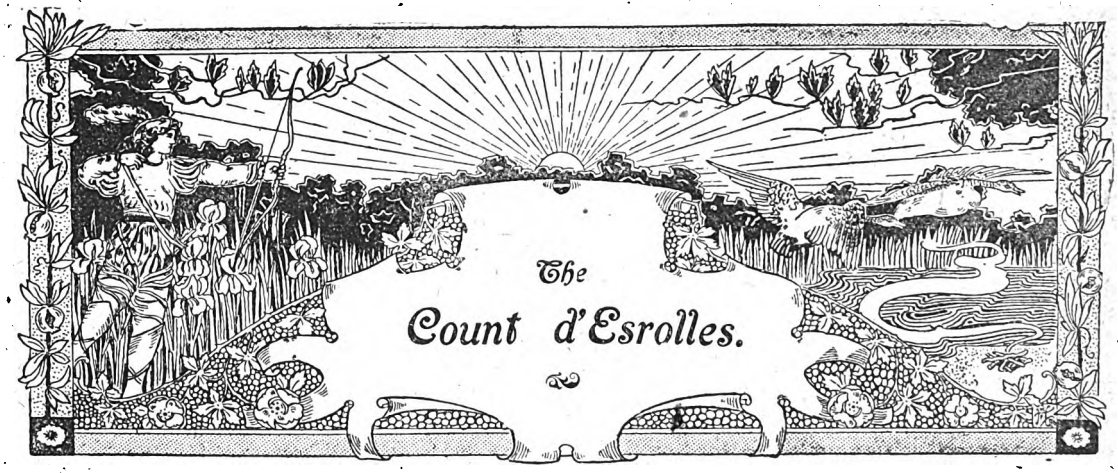

SIR HUGH ELVILLE was not in the best of tempers as he walked aimlessly through the avenue which led to the public road.

Every now and again he would stop and vent his spleen by cutting off the head of some unoffending flower; while the dog which he was leading by a chain would come in for a share of his master's wrath. Reaching the lodge gates the baronet turned at right angles, and continued his walk beside the hedge which formed the boundary of the park.

The anger of the old nobleman seemed to increase with each successive step.

"The estate is going to the dogs, and there is nothing but bankruptcy staring me in the face. I have had to curtail my establishment, and before long I shall have to give up the pack. These are small matters, but they are the forerunners of complete and irretrievable ruin."

Muttering in this manner, Sir Hugh emphasised his remarks by lashing right and left with his cane.

Reaching a quiet spot he again commenced his maledictions:

"Thanks to those rascals—Felwin and Bardale—I am reduced to this. It was no error in judgment on their part when they advised me to sell out my Government stocks and purchase mining shares with the proceeds. The transaction has involved me in losses such as I shall never retrieve. This comes of reposing absolute confidence in stockbrokers, who have had but their own nefarious ends in view from the beginning—— "

The remainder of the sentence was left unfinished, for, proceeding up the lane behind the hedge, was his daughter Gwendoline, and by her side walked Bernadin Vallertin, the sight of whom seemed to drive the baronet into renewed frenzy.

Unseen, but seeing, the latter peered through the hedge, and, for the moment, he appeared to lose control of himself. His first impulse was to dash forward and at once put a stop to the interview; but, as there was no means of egress, he contented himself with watching the pair until they disappeared in the distance, and then he recommenced his tirade against his misfortunes.

"And that it should have come to this! My only child to take up with a common adventurer—a Frenchman, whose origin is such that he seeks to hide it from us, and that, too, after an acquaintance of a year's duration.

"I have warned Gwendoline; but all to no purpose apparently. Sterner methods, therefore, are called for. The presuming foreigner must be taught once and for all that his advances are impertinent, and that they are not in accordance with the traditions of the House of Elville!"

The baronet turned proudly upon his heel, and made his way back slowly in the direction of the mansion.

"And you find the company of Bernadin Vallertin more congenial than that of your father's more intimate friends?"

The question was put by Elville to his daughter on the morning after he had been a witness to her meeting with the Frenchman.

Gwendoline tried in vain to suppress the blush that rose to her cheeks as she replied:

"I cannot quite understand you, father; I am at a loss to know what it is that prompts you to make such an inquiry."

"Is it necessary for me to explain myself? Surely, my child, you would not go so far as to deny that you spent a considerable portion of your time yesterday in a ramble with the man to whom I am alluding."

The tell-tale crimson which rose to the girl's face told its own story. To deceive her father never entered into her mind. She had a predilection for the handsome foreigner, it was true, but, knowing her father's hasty disposition, she hesitated to acquaint him with the fact that the meeting with Vallertin had been prearranged.

Following up his advantage, the old baronet continued:

"Has it come to this—for the only living representative of the House of Elville to be brought down to the level of an unknown foreigner? Are not the losses which I have sustained through the knavery of my brokers sufficient of themselves, or must you—my only child, add still further to my humiliation by encouraging one of the common people?"

"But, father," pleaded the girl, with tears in her eyes "surely you are prejudiced—unreasonably prejudiced against Bernadin!"

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"Bernadin! You must indeed have made progress in this familiarity if you can speak of that upstart by his Christian name? Really, Gwendoline, I shall soon begin to think that you are attempting to test the limits of my patience. Have you not the *entrée* into the highest society in the county? Have I not given you every opportunity that lies in my power that you may associate with your equals in birth and position? Must I accuse you of ingratitude as well as bad taste? Who is this Frenchman, I should like to know, who presumes to associate with his betters? A chance acquaintance that we made at Aix les Bains—nothing else!"

"And an acquaintance, father, whom you favoured. You lavished every praise upon him when we met at the Hotel Angleterre, and you remarked at the time how highly you esteemed him. He was your constant companion for weeks, and you must surely forget that you gave him an open invitation to Hawleigh Towers in the event of his ever paying a visit to England. I must confess that I cannot understand this sudden change in your opinions, and I think you must have some hidden reason for taking such a dislike to the man whom you were once pleased to regard as a desirable friend."

"Then I am to be called to account by my own daughter!" exclaimed Erville, with warmth. "I do not deny that the acquaintanceship of Bernadin Vallertin was congenial—the temporary acquaintance, I should say. He is a man of considerable fortune, and as such, he proved of great service to me. I have no doubt that I should have been exposed to consequences which, at the time, I trembled to think of, had it not been for his intervention. I was losing heavily at the tables, but a timely loan from him saved me. That loan was repaid in due course, and I never dreamt that he would one day take up his residence in the neighbourhood of Hawleigh Towers as he has now done. As a travelling acquaintance I appreciated his company, but, at home, I consider that it is undesirable, and any advances on his part I regard in the light of an unqualified impertinence."

The last utterance of the Baronet was accompanied by an impatient stamp of the foot, and Gwendoline saw that further argument was useless.

After the above recorded interview was over, Sir Hugh Elville retired to his study.

For the space of a full half-hour he sat meditating in front of the fire. Several letters were lying upon the table, the sight of which caused him no little uneasiness. Only too well did he divine their contents. Summoning up courage he at last ventured to open them. He had not been mistaken in his surmises as to the tenor of the batch of correspondence which was addressed to him. Demands for a speedy settlement of long-standing debts, coupled with threats of litigation in the event of non-payment by certain specified dates, stared him in the face.

He groaned aloud as he turned over the heap. The unfortunate speculations he had been advised to make had left him without ready money. The deeds of his estates were in the hands of his bankers as cover against the heavy overdraft which they had granted him.

He was at his wits' end to know how to meet his liabilities. He recalled the meeting of Gwendoline and the Frenchman, and then he muttered to himself—"I could have put a stop to this degradation if I had had the money. Gwendoline, without doubt, is infatuated with the dashing foreigner, and I would have taken her away for a year's travelling to cure her of her folly. But it is useless now to think of such a course. My absence would be regarded in the light of an attempt to

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evade my creditors. Disgrace stares me in the face; but bankruptcy is preferable to the alliance of an Elville with one of the 'herd!' Vallertin has wealth, of that I am assured, and I know that he would remove my financial difficulties, were I to receive him as a future member of our family. That, alas, would be the price of his favour—but it cannot be dreamt of—I will not entertain the thought for a single moment!"

A haughty expression passed over Elville's features as he added, "To-morrow, Gwendoline shall know that I forbid her to meet the Frenchman, that, henceforth, he is to be a stranger to the Towers. She shall hear my commands the first thing, and then I will proceed to London and interview the family solicitors."

* * * * *

Sir Hugh was as good as his word.

Immediately he rose on the morning after he had come to the decision to terminate the friendship between his daughter and Vallertin, he gave orders for the brougham to be ready to take him to the station, and in the meanwhile he waited for Gwendoline to put in her appearance at the breakfast-table.

This, however, she failed to do at the appointed time, but her maid brought word to say that her young mistress was feeling indisposed, and that she preferred to take her breakfast in her bedroom.

"Indisposed, indeed! A case of love sickness, which will soon be cured. I am not to be frustrated, and Gwendoline will see before long the wisdom of my resolution."

The meal was hurried through, for the first train was due to start in less than an hour.

Having a few minutes to spare, Elville snatched up a sheet of paper, and writing out the decision he had made on the night previous, he directed one of the servants to give it to his daughter without delay.

The brougham drove off, and a few moments later Gwendoline, pale from the effects of a sleepless night, and with her eyes full of tears, descended the staircase and made her way into the study.

She had made up her mind as to the course to pursue. Deeply as she loved Bernadin, her duty to her father stood before every other consideration. She had anticipated that her parent would forbid all further friendship with Bernadin; and, with a heavy heart, she commenced a letter to her lover and explained to him the reason why she was now forbidden all intercourse with him.

The visit to the family solicitors had been productive of no better results than Sir Hugh had expected.

Immediately he returned, he shut himself up in his study and gave way to the gloomiest reflections.

He was a ruined man, and he knew that nothing short of a miracle could save him from ignominy.

He unlocked the drawers of his bureau and took out the letters which he had gone through the night before. Several others of like import had arrived during his visit to London, and, with a trembling hand he sorted them, first in one order, then in another.

He scarcely knew what he was doing. He seemed to be dazed as he meditated upon the inevitable consequences of his rash speculations. Unlocking the door of a cabinet, he took out a decanter of brandy. He had poured out a glassful of the spirit and was on the point of swallowing it when a tapping on the door arrested his attention.

"A visitor to see you, sir!"

"A visitor, at this hour of the day!" exclaimed the ·onet, as he snatched up the card which was lying upon the salver. He read the inscription—a name that was quite unfamiliar to him.

"*The Count d'Esrolles!* I know no one of that title—a perfect stranger to me—I have not even a creditor of that name."

Making his way to the reception room, Elville found awaiting him there no other than Bernadin.

"An unexpected visit this, Monsieur Vallertin." Sir Hugh remarked icily.

"Count d'Esrolles, if you please," added the Frenchman with a coolness that took the baronet aback.

"Count d'Esrolles!" ejaculated the latter with amazement. He hardly knew what interpretation to put upon Bernadin's revelation. He thought that it was but a fresh piece of impertinence on the part of Vallertin who, reading the other's countenance, replied:

"Yes. I am Bernadin Vallertin—also Count d'Esrolles. You hesitate, perhaps, in accepting my claim to that title, but I can give you proofs of my identity—here is one."

Bernadin, as he spoke, produced from his pocket a copy of *Le Monde Illustré*, in which he pointed out a page that was devoted to a likeness of a man who bore the name—Le Comte d'Esrolles.

Elville saw at a glance that the portrait was that of Bernadin himself.

"You, doubtless, are able to divine the motives which have led me to seek this interview. In plain words, I ask for the hand of your daughter. I have good reason to believe that Gwendoline is not wholly indifferent to my advances. I will not dwell at length upon the object which has prompted me to come into this neighbourhood, and to pass myself as 'Monsieur Vallertin.' It was from love of your daughter alone that I acted the part of a friend in need when you were in difficulties at Aix. It is from love of her that I have hidden my present whereabouts from my own family, who are averse to my seeking a union with a foreigner. You will pardon me these candid statements, but circumstances demand a freedom of speech, which otherwise I should never have dreamt of adopting. Gwendoline has already acquainted me with the fact that you have forbidden a continuance of our friendship; and now that I have given you an explanation, am I to understand that you still regard my suit as unwelcome?"

Elville quavered as he listened to the straightforward avowal of the man who was addressing him, and he felt keenly the rebuke which was administered to his proud spirit. In a broken voice he replied:

"Forgive me, d'Esrolles, my hastiness. I am utterly ashamed of the unhappy attitude that I have adopted, and I crave your pardon!"

* * * * *

"Gwendoline, darling!" whispered Bernadin in the ear of his lovely bride, "I have a secret which I cannot keep any longer from you. How it has pained me, no tongue can tell—that I should have been guilty of deceiving your father, but it was my only course to win you, and to save him from utter ruin. I am Bernadin Vallertin—plain 'Monsieur,' and nothing else!"

"And your title was but an assumed one, Bernadin?"

"Yes, and no, Gwendoline!" Le Comte d'Esrolles was but my stage name. Ten years ago did I play that part at the Theatre Français, and, with such a degree of success that I was able to retire from the stage one of the richest men in the profession!"

GEORGE H. BEST.

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Every Man suffering from Varicocele and its consequent nervous exhaustion speedily relieved and cured by the most advanced and rational method of treatment yet introduced. An Illustrated Circular giving full particulars and testimonials showing successful cures, sent free in a sealed envelope —S. S. NORTON, 59 and 60 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C. Established over 30 years. Consultation Free.

DRUNKENNESS
CURED. This can be done with or without patient's knowledge. Send me a stamp and I will tell you how. (Send no money.) Address, in confidence, Mrs. C. H. (Room 8), 195 Oxford Street, London, W.

A GUARANTEED CURE.
For ECZEMA AND ALL SKIN ERUPTIONS.
A victim, who was cured after five years' suffering, will gladly send full particulars of an inexpensive, guaranteed Cure on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—PACIDERMA, 215 Piccadilly, London, W.

BILE BEANS for BILIOUSNESS

Cures Goitre.

Remarkable Discovery That Cures This Dangerous and Disfiguring Disease Without Pain, Operation or Inconvenience.

TRIAL PACKAGE SENT FREE.

Dr. John P. Haig, a well-known Cincinnati physician has had marvellous success with a remedy that cures Goitre or Thick Neck. And owing to the fact that most sufferers believe

Mrs. Lillian Brown, who was entirely cured of Goitre after suffering for 22 years.

Goitre is incurable Dr. Haig sends a free trial package of his discovery so that patients may try and know positively that Goitre can be cured at home without pain, danger, operation or any inconvenience.

Send your name and address to Dr. John P. Haig, 2828 Glenn Building, Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A., and he will forward the trial package post-paid. Do not fail to get this wonderful remedy.

In Rio Janiero, Brazil, S. A., 10,000 patients in that infected district were cured with this same remedy, and wherever used its success has been marvellous.

Remember a letter to America requires 2½d postage. Write your name very plain and be sure to give your full address so there can be no mistake in delivery.

GREAT SALE.

CYCLES HALF PRICE.
Busy men want sound, reliable mounts. Symonds' Cycles are best and cheapest, fully guaranteed, riders delighted with them. Your money back if not as represented. Our cycles are built on honour. Catalogue Free. Address:
SYMONDS LONDON STORES, 66 Hatton Garden, London. E.C.

HAND-ORGANS from 20s.

Made in 3 sizes, ebony and gold case. With 6 metal tunes. Full organ tone. Plays songs, hymns, dance music. Sent on receipt of 4s. P.O., if desired. Write for terms to pay 4s. monthly. Price list and tunes. ATLAS CO., 1846 High St., Camden Town, London; 63 Seven Sisters Rd.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

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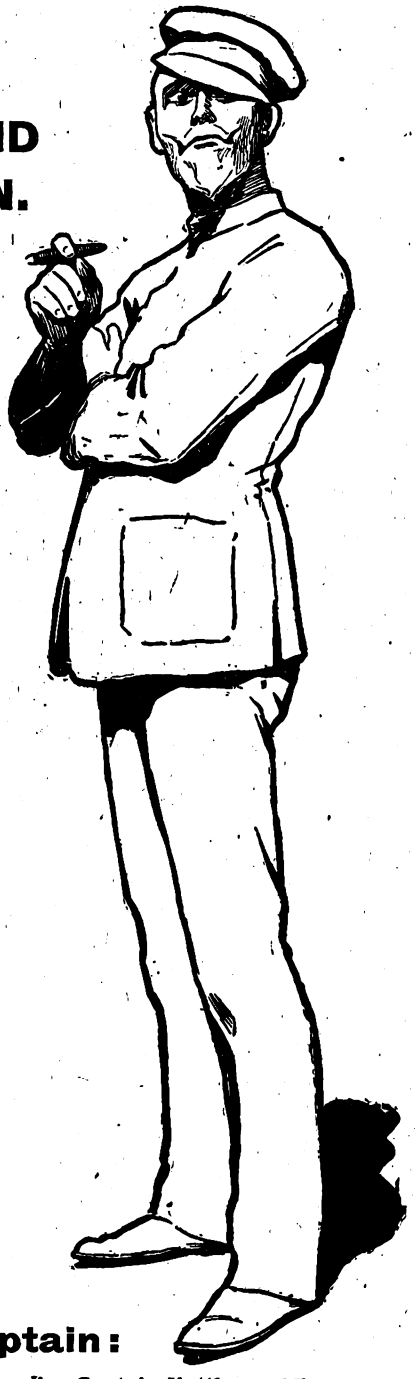
OUR OLD FRIEND AGAIN.



The Captain:

"Yes, Sir. I'm Captain Kettle, and I'd have you remember I'm a long way off being DEAD yet.

"By James! You get 'Pearson's' and see."

(The famous Captain Kettle Stories recommence in "Pearson's Magazine" for January.

"ALKAN"

Cures in One Minute

BY INHALATION

HEADACHE, FACIAL NEURALGIA, TOOTHACHE, NEURALGIA OF THE EAR.

Attention is particularly requested to the following press opinion, selected from some thousands which commands the attention of and a trial by the sufferer.

The *Family Doctor* writes:
"From investigation of the constituents, we have confidence in saying that the good results are not only rapid, but lasting and free from danger."

This simple and perfectly harmless Remedy has cured instantaneously thousands suffering from the above complaints.

THE EFFECT IS MARVELLOUS.

PRICE, 1st Size, **2/9**; 2nd Size **4/6**, per bottle.

Sent post paid from Depot to any part of the United Kingdom on receipt of price. P.O. should be made payable to "The Alkan Ltd.," and crossed Lloyd's Bank Ltd. (Law Courts Branch), and letters containing stamps registered.

May be obtained from all Chemists and Stores.

If unobtainable locally write to the Sole Proprietors,

THE ALKAN LTD.,

GENERAL DEPOT: **150 STRAND, LONDON, W.C.**

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London.

2½% **DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS** 2½%
repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.
FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager.*

A BOY'S OVERCOAT

Can be made by any lady who follows carefully the Paper Pattern and instructions

GIVEN AWAY

with every copy of THIS WEEK'S

Home Notes

(No. 416).

The Best and Daintiest of Ladies' Weeklies. You should get a copy at once.

ONE PENNY.

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 6th. Postcards only, please.

His Parting Shot.

HE: "But couldn't you learn to love me, Ida?" She: "I don't think I could, George." He (reaching for his hat): "It is as I feared. You are too old to learn."

Woman's Gentle Sway.

"HAVE a cigar?" "No, thank you. I've given up smoking entirely." "You have, eh? Allow me to congratulate you. When is the wedding to take place?"

Unfair Advantage.

JESS: "I thought that you hated Jack, and yet you have accepted him." Bess: "I did hate him; but he proposed under an umbrella, and said if I refused he would let the rain drip on my new bonnet."

Hadn't Time.

"So you went to the country on Sunday, Mrs. Hogg, I hear?" "Yes, me and the old man thought we'd have a change." "And what did you see when you got there?" "Nothing. It was a cheap trip, and we had to start off home again."

A Polite Dog.

MOTHER: "Did you thank the gentleman who carried you across the crowded street?" Wee Son: "I tried to, but I didn't know what to say—the words wouldn't come somehow; but I think it's all right, 'cause my dog wagged his tail enough for both of us."

Whose was Best.

ENTHUSIASTIC ARTIST: "Do you know I painted a picture of a lion so naturally that it had to be placed behind bars." Enthusiastic Author: "That's nothing. I wrote a novel so full of burning emotion that it had to be printed on asbestos pages for fear of consuming them."

Piling-up the Punishment.

A CONVICT in a German prison had been extremely refractory. One means and another had been tried, but nothing could break his spirit. One morning the governor said to the keeper, "I say, Huber, the scoundrel is behaving worse than ever. Put him on bread and water." "But he is already doing two fast days." "Then give him a cookery book to read."

What Raised the Circulation.

"WHAT'S this I hear?" asked the business manager of the *Tooting Tootler*, as he entered the publisher's room. "You don't mean to tell me that all of last week's papers are sold?" "Not a copy left," responded the clerk. "And wasn't there an extra edition printed?" "Yes, sir, two of them; but they are all sold out, and the people are asking for more." "What's causing the wonderful sale?" "The society editor inserted a line in last week's paper saying that Miss Smith is the most beautiful young lady in town. He didn't say which Miss Smith, and that's the reason of it."

How They Would Decide.

WEALTHY AMATEUR: "Since you spoke to Jones and myself about this picture, Cadmium, we have arranged that one of us shall have it." Cadmium (brightening): "I am glad of that, very glad; glad on your account, too. Which of you has it?" Wealthy Amateur: "Well, we are going to toss up for it, and the one that loses takes the picture."

A Redeeming Feature.

A.: "My dwelling is bounded on the north by gas works, on the south by some indiarubber works, on the west by a vinegar manufactory, and on the east by a glue-boiling establishment." B.: "A nice neighbourhood, I must say." A.: "Quite so; but it has one advantage. I can always tell which way the wind blows without looking at the weathercock."

Knew What Would Happen.

QUICKPEN (a bookkeeper): "Hello, Thumper, where to?" Thumper (a typewriter): "I'm going to the country for a month's holiday. I've just been discharged by Closefist to make room for a young woman at a smaller salary. I'll have my old place back in about a month." Quickpen: "Think so?" Thumper: "Oh, yes. She'll marry him by that time, and after that she'll make him employ a man."

Payment According to Name Wanted.

"WHAT'S the matter, William?" said the wealthy householder. "Anything gone wrong?" "Not exactly gone wrong, sir, but I want a new understanding." "What about?" "My pay, sir." "Why, you get very good wages for a cook." "Yes, sir; they does very well for a cook, sir. But I overheard you when you were talking to your friends, sir. You called me your *chef*." "Well, you ought to be complimented." "Yes, sir, I'm complimented; but business is business. I can't be a *chef* for less than £800. Wages is all right for a cook, but a *chef* has to have a salary."

The Professional Habit.

HERE is a little tonsorial joke which, whether true or untrue, amusingly illustrates the force of habit. A hairdresser was summoned to a private house the other day simply to shave a pet poodle. The young lady of the house, hearing a sound of a voice in the room in which the operation was being performed, put her ear delicately to the keyhole, and this is what she heard: "Nice day, sir. (Pause.) Razor suit you, sir? (Pause.) Good deal of weather, sir, lately. (Pause.) A little powder, sir? (Pause.) Hair's very thin, sir, on the top; wants a bottle of hair restorer; shampoo, sir? (Growl.) Next!"

PHOTO COMPETITION.

THIS week, two correct claims have been received in connection with the Photo Competition, and £5 notes have been sent to the following:

MISS LOUIE FREEAR, (No. 56),
Strand Theatre,
London, W.C.

MISS MAY DOWLING (No. 58),
Holmbush,
High Park,
Ryde, Isle of Wight.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, January 13th, 1902.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 13.

BAGATELLE.

From each of the following proverbs select a word. Write the words thus selected in a column, when the first letter of each, if the words are correct, will spell the name of a distinguished inventor of the nineteenth century.

1. The more haste the less speed.
2. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
3. The hand of the diligent maketh rich.
4. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
5. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

No. 14.

LETTER PUZZLE.

1. What letter prefixed to not early gives a shallow vessel?
2. What letter changes a word meaning to listen into a fierce fish?
3. What letter will change a useful fluid into a delicate colour?
4. What letter will change large into a specimen?
5. What letter changes farther down into the blossom of a plant?
6. What letter will change a farmer's tool into a covering for the feet?
7. What letter will change the fastening of a door into a timepiece?
8. What letter will change a relative into a frequent resort?

QUERIES.

No. 15.

1. What islands should be taken for lunch?
2. What city will always float?
3. What city is always increasing?
4. What country do you like to have for Christmas?
5. In what island must it always be summer?
6. What country would ruin a new dress?

No. 16.

CHARADE.

I'm a word of five letters. Please tell me my name;
Read me backwards or forwards I spell just the same.
My syllable *first* means insane, and my *second*
A part of a verb has always been reckoned.
My *whole* is a term of respectful address.
You think this is all; but wait; make me less.
Behead and curtail me, and then you will see
That the name of a girl I turn out to be,
Which, read backwards or forwards, is always the same.
Now solve me my riddle and tell me my name.

No. 17.

NUMERICAL ENIGMA.

My whole is a couplet of Pope, containing 68 letters, showing his opinion of omens.

Among the nations who have believed in omens were the 11, 19, 23, 28, 42, 9, and 25, 5, 29, 8, 38, 15; the 16, 56, 26, 44, 39, 10, 31, 34, 27, 54, 65, 49, 36, and the 50, 33, 2, 7, 18, 12, 16.

In 30, 51, 11, 6, 61, 2, 23, 67, an important place has always been given to 24, 14, 19, 20, 41.

A 67, 1, 37, 59 is to the sailor an omen of fair weather.

The croak of the 33, 40, 27, 48, 12, and the 4, 45, 46, 3 of an owl were evil omens.

Many found omens in 32, 25, 68, 26, 47, 55.

To dream of gold was a presage of 43, 58, 64, 56, 23, 63, 55.

It was an ill omen to look at the new moon first through a 17, 2, 31, 39, 57, 35, but a sign of good luck to see it first at your 33, 2, 11, 22, 21, 53, 8, 38, 32.

It was ill-luck to put one's 9, 13, 46, 48, 43 on "awry."

No. 18.

GEOGRAPHICAL PUZZLE.

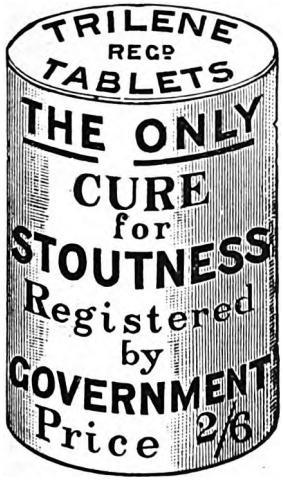
Two girls (*a lake in Africa*) and (*a city in Sicily*), went out to buy some (*island in the Pacific Ocean*) presents. On getting out of the 'bus (*a lake in Africa*) hurt her (*a city in Suffolk*). In a little while she felt better. In one shop (*a city in Sicily*) bought a (*a sea in Persia*) bow and a pair of (*a seaside village in the south-west of France*) gloves. In another shop she bought (*a city in Ireland*) for her smelling-bottle. As yet they had bought no (*an island in the Pacific Ocean*) presents. (*City in Sicily*) bought a (*the first name of a territory in Africa*) pencil for her brother (*a small township in Yorkshire*), and a pretty (*small sea on one side of Australia*) pin for her mother; also a scarf-pin in the shape of (*a cape at the south of South America*) for her father. (*Lake in Africa*) bought her sister (*a town in the north of Egypt*) some preserved (*a river in Africa*) (*a city on the Isle of Man*), a younger sister a doll's (*a country in Asia*) set, her mother an (*a city in Russia*) cape, and her father a (*a city in India*) scarf.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

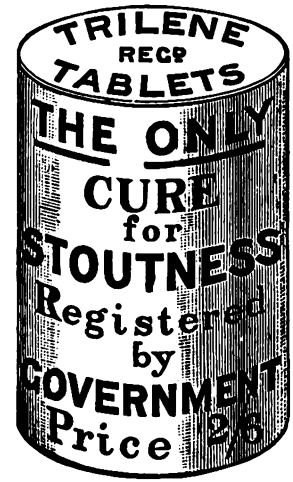
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 8st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced I is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

IF YOU WISH

Worth a Guinea a Box.

To EAT WELL, SLEEP WELL, and WORK WELL,

TAKE

BEECHAM'S PILLS

YOU WILL EAT WELL

BECAUSE by their specific action on the Digestive Organs **BEECHAM'S PILLS** remove the sensation of fulness and oppression commonly experienced, give the appetite "edge," and restore the Stomach to healthy and natural function.

YOU WILL SLEEP WELL

BECAUSE Beecham's Pills gently calm irritation of the Nervous system, while by their stimulative and cleansing action upon the Liver and Kidneys, Digestion proceeds with normal regularity, so that at night the tranquillised mind and body are prepared for "Nature's sweet restorer"—peaceful slumber. Should one feel restless after an exciting or convivial evening, a dose of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** will quickly induce refreshing sleep.

YOU WILL WORK WELL

BECAUSE Beecham's Pills bring about the proper assimilation of the food taken, give tone to the Stomach, purify the Blood, invigorate the Nervous system, add force to the Muscles, and thus endue the worker—mental or physical—with renewed energy and power.

The World's Medicine.

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No. 680. For Week Ending January 11th, 1902. [One Penny.

PEARSON'S SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME & TRAIN

ONE PENNY.

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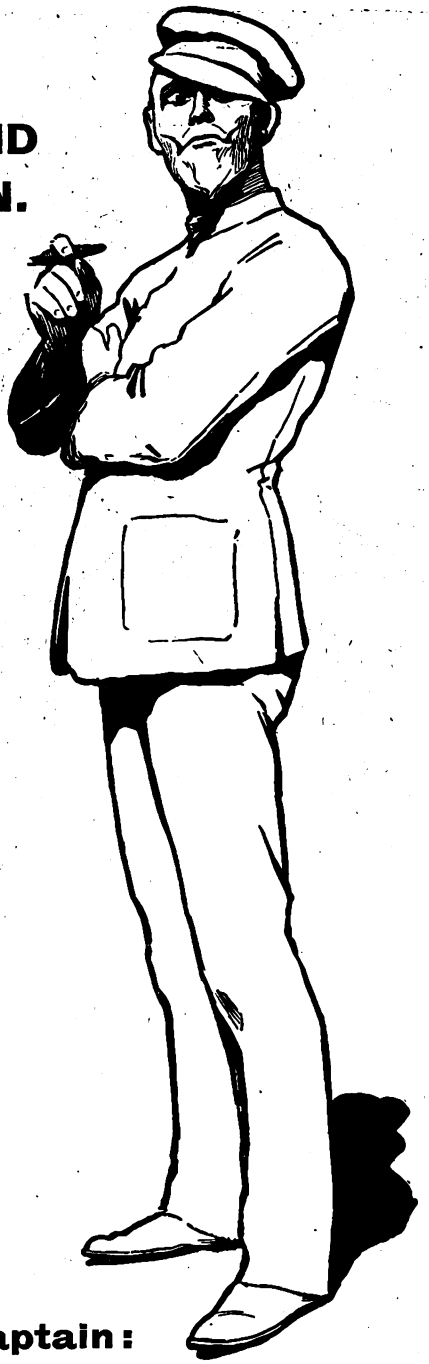
OUR OLD FRIEND AGAIN.



The Captain:

"Yes, Sir. I'm Captain Kettle, and I'd have you remember I'm a long way off being DEAD yet.

"By James! You get 'Pearson's' and see."

(The famous Captain Kettle Stories recommence in "Pearson's Magazine" for January.

Lady's Complete Outfit.

J. G. GRAVES'

'ELEGANT' PARCEL contains:

Black Sateen Cloth Blouse with smocked yoke, Black Costume Skirt with deep fashionable flounce and 9 rows of cording, Pair Model Corsets, Underskirt, check or stripe and in different colours, Pair Black Cashmere Hose (double heels and toes), Cream Lace Scarf, and Black Velvet and Satin Pulley Belt. **36/-**

IMPORTANT.

When ordering, please state length of Dress Skirt in front from below waist band; also size of corsets worn or waist measurement over dress.

TERMS. Send only 4s. with order, and, if the parcel meets with your approval, pay the balance in eight more monthly payments of 4s. each.

If you are not **perfectly satisfied** as to the genuine value of the parcel, return it, and the amount of your deposit will be refunded in full.

Send a Post Card for **Illustrated Price List** of Drapery Goods, Baby Linen, Mantles, Capes, Jackets, Men's and Youths' Suits, Overcoats, etc., etc.

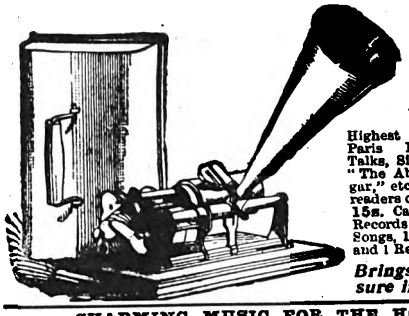
Wanted Spare Time Agents.—Persons who can introduce New Customers are requested to write for terms.

J. G. GRAVES, 69 Division Street, SHEFFIELD.

"THE MACHINE THAT TALKS."

CAMPBELL'S CRAPHOPHONE is the best Talking and Singing Machine in the Market at the Price.

A FASCINATING AND UNRIVALLED ENTERTAINER FOR THE HOME CIRCLE.

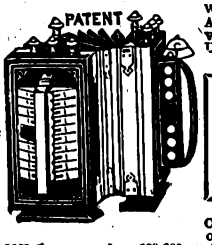


CAMPBELL'S HOME GRAND GRAPHOPHONE. This is no German manufacture, but the new American 20th Century Talking Machine, which gained the Highest Awards at the Paris Exhibition, 1900. Talks, Sings, and recites "The Absent-Minded Beggar," etc. Special price to readers of *Short Stories*, £2 15s. Carriage paid, with 4 Records free. 2 Vocal Songs, 1 Orchestral Piece, and 1 Recitation.

Brings Endless Pleasure into the Home.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR THE HOME.

CAMPBELL'S Gold Medal MELODEONS



With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Sweet Bell Accompaniments. **No Home should be without one.** *No Knowledge of Music required.* Used throughout the world.

200,000 TESTIMONIALS.

Special Offer to the Readers of *Short Stories*.

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeons, price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon, " 10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon, " 14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon, " 16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount.

Either sent carriage paid to any address in Great Britain & Ireland.

All lovers of music should at once send for Campbell's New Illustrated Privilege Price List of all kinds of Musical Instruments for Season 1901-2, now ready. 200,000 sent out yearly. Send 1d. Stamp to—CAMPBELL & Co., Musical Instrument Makers, 116 Trongate, GLASGOW. *Established 50 Years.* BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS.

SHORT STORIES

No. 680.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending January 11th, 1902.

FROM THE GATES OF DEATH.

THE STORY OF A GREAT QUEST.

Being the sequel to "My Millionaire Patient," which appeared in *SHORT STORIES* dated November 23rd, 1901.

In Explanation.

Some ten years before the happening of the things herein contained, one Siever Crafte, a monstrously rich American, but a man with regard to whom mysterious rumour had much to say, called upon Dr. Septimus Ewles, then administrator of anæsthetics at St. Andrew's Hospital, London, late one night, at his private residence, after a preliminary visit on the morning of the same day, ostensibly as a patient.

Crafte, who was a man of strong will, by means of hypnotic influence, endeavours to bend the doctor to participation in his, Crafte's, schemes, which endeavour fails, through the timely intervention of Haidée Van Cloo, Ewles' betrothed.

Haidée had become casually acquainted with Crafte on a previous occasion in Paris, and owing to his unwelcome attentions, had contracted a deep feeling of disgust for him.

Crafte gone from the house, Haidée imparts her fears to her lover, which are only too surely verified by the successive, ceaseless persecution of the doctor by

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his millionaire patient. Day and night, here, there, and everywhere, does the American pursue, and torture the other by means of a diabolical system of whispered suggestion.

Then matters crystallise. Haidee writes to Ewles at the Hospital, making an appointment for him to meet her in Piccadilly. He keeps the tryst, but she fails to come. Next day reveals the fact that she has disappeared, and also, at almost the same hour, Siever Crafte, drops out of sight.

Detective Inspector Ryan, of Scotland Yard, then gives Ewles such information as leads him to believe that Haidee Van Cloo has gone away with Crafte. Whether willingly or by coercion, the doctor cannot say, the fact alone remains that the two vanished almost simultaneously.

Possessed with an overmastering desire for revenge upon the man whom he supposes to have wrought him this wrong, Ewles throws up his post at St. Andrew's, and only confiding in a medical friend, decides to go in quest of his enemy and his love.

The only clue to Crafte's movements is that obtained by Inspector Ryan, who discovers for the doctor that the American and a lady booked at Charing Cross for Frankfort, on the night of the 19th of June.

Frankfort, therefore, is obviously the first point of Septimus Ewles' search.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE IN THE JUDENSTRASSE, FRANKFORT.

IT was the evening of the 17th of January last year; within an hour of midnight, in fact.

Two men sat, one on either side a plain deal table, in an upper room, or roof-chamber, of a high, tumble-down old house, in the Judenstrasse, Frankfort-on-the-Main.

One of the twain was an elderly, slovenly, and not too cleanly man. Unmistakably a German Jew, he was spectacled, and boasted a long, unkempt, white beard, that descended almost to his waist.

He had an evil eye, had this same old Herr Isaachar Gaben, the most rascally money-changer the whole continent over; an eye which, in spite of yourself, forced itself upon you, as something to be unpleasantly reckoned with. But his words were as a mixture of butter and honey, so softly sweet were they.

Englishman was plainly written upon every point and feature of the other man. Well set-up, and with honest blue eyes that preached truth and kindliness every time they met your own, he yet looked to be harassed and worried; physically and mentally "run down" even.

"And so the Herr Doctor is resolved to seek out his American friend," the old Jew was saying (there was no doubt as to his Semitic origin); "well! well! The English are a wonderful people!—a wonderful people!"

"All that is beside the mark. I believe you to have information as to this man, Siever Crafte's present whereabouts."

"I have told you," replied the other, with a shrug that sent his shoulders up to his ear-tops, "I know him—this Herr Crafte, but—it is long since I saw him; two—th—"

"Saw him—yes!" broke in Septimus Ewles, impatiently, "but heard of him—no!—I am convinced that you and he are in close correspondence—you can't deny it!"

Herr Graben's naturally bad temper was only conventionally restrained, just as his oily politeness was but skin-deep.

"Find him!—you!—"—he snarled. "Me!—I know nothing!—I tell you nothing!—You come to me, and say: 'I want the Herr Crafte!—I *must* find him!' Well—find him!—it is your business—it is none of mine."

Septimus Ewles was about to reply to this tirade, when the room door opened softly, and a girl—or woman rather, for she was fully six or seven-and-twenty—entered, and approached the old Jew.

The old man, who had risen from his seat in the excitement of his last utterance, glanced at her angrily.

"Katrina!" he said, shaking his skinny forefinger at her vehemently. "Go away! I told you I would not be disturbed. Go away!"

It was a sad, a very sad face, that of the girl, a face implying much, and hard sorrow, patiently endured; much soul-depression, fought back in the face of great and terrible odds.

Still, with it all, there was a gleam of the higher intelligence in her eyes; an appearance of keen concentration in her attitude of passive attention to her father's semi-savage reproof.

"I did but seek to bid you to supper," she said, with a half-glance of curiosity at the stranger. "Will it please you to come now?"

"No! I am busy, cannot you see, slow-wit that you are, with the Herr Englishman. Go! I will come presently."

Was it fancy—or did Septimus Ewles really see a warning look in the girl's eyes, as she turned to move towards the room door? Was the finger upon the lip meant as a silent underlining of the warning?

It would seem so.

"Look you!" snarled the old Jew, after his daughter had left the room and closed the door. "Look you! What interest have I in finding this Herr Crafte, even supposing that I know where he is?"

"Then you *do* know!" quickly returned the other.

"I did not say so—I do not say so. But you have not answered my question."

"Because I have changed my mind."

"Well?"

"I came to you about this matter because it was told me (how, I prefer not to say), that you have, or had relations with the man I seek."

"Shu!—you do not know!—no one knows!" angrily interrupted the old man.

"That is as it may be," quietly went on his companion. "Now I have determined to do without your aid; although you have said quite enough to give me more than a fair clue to Siever Crafte's hiding-place. This, and something that has just occurred to me, has decided me to—well—to go to work my own way."

"I care not!—I care not!" cried the doubly-baffled Israelite, his cupidity unsatisfied; his curiosity with regard to the doctor's plans ungratified also. "You will never find him—this Herr Siever Crafte—never!—without me! Come!—give me—give me five hundred of your pounds—ten thousand reichsmarks, and I will find him for you."

"No!—my mind is made up—I will save my money—and—gain my end."

In sheer impotence of disappointed greed, the wretched old money-huckster leant across the table and snapped his claw-like fingers in the Englishman's face.

"Bah!" he almost screamed, "I will give *you*

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twenty thousand!—fifty thousand!—a million marks! if you find him!"

"Thanks!—that is very good of you," said Ewles rising, and taking his hat. "Perhaps I may have to remind you of the offer some day."

But Isaachar Gaben spoke no more. Taking up the lamp he made to light his visitor down the dark, rickety stairway of the crazy old house. At the first floor he stopped, and without word or sign, passed through into a room, the door of which stood open, leaving the doctor to find his way out as best he might.

It was as dark as Erebus. Down the creaky, bare staircase he felt his way—his only guide a faint streak of light, coming from the ill-fitting street door.

He was about to move the handle of the lock, when a soft touch upon his arm told him that he was not alone.

"Mein herr!" (he recognised Katrina's voice whispering in his ear), "I have heard your errand.

"Sh!—My father is right—by yourself you will never find the man you seek. But—(do not speak) start at once—this very hour—for Marseilles—there ship for Pekin by the shortest route. If you reach the Chinese capital before noon of the 2nd of March, you will hear of Siever Crafte in the smoking-room of the English club-house. Good night."

"Stay," whispered Ewles excitedly. "You have told me much, you must tell me more! Is—is there a lady with him?"

"No!—a thousand times no!"

"Do you know where *she* is?"

"You will know when you reach Pekin. But my father is stirring—sh!"

"Katrina!"

A light came out of the room on the first floor, and would soon have shone down the stairway, revealing the pair by the door.

She deftly, however, shot back the bolt, and gently pushing Ewles into the street, silently closed the door behind him.

At that moment half-past-twelve sounded solemnly from high up in the steeple of St. Bartholémy.

Setting his face in the direction of his hotel, Septimus Ewles looked up joyously into the star-flecked sky.

"Thank God!" he cried looking up, as if to ask sympathy from the lights of Heaven. "I shall find my love, and—my foe!"

CHAPTER II.

On the Trail.

It was in the early morning of February 23rd when Septimus Ewles landed at the Bund, Shanghai.

Everything had a new and strange flavour for him, his previous travelling experience having been limited to an annual Continental trip, and, five years before, to a three months' tour through the States. Chinatown, San Francisco, was the nearest like to anything celestial he had ever seen, although in itself Shanghai is too cosmopolitan, too much Westernised, to be altogether accepted as a genuine example of a typical Chinese city. As he saw it in the morning sun, from the deck of the fussy little steam launch that had gone out to meet the Pacific Mail steamer, *Orient Queen*, at the Woosung Bar, or "Heavenly Barrier," at the mouth of the Yang-tse-Kiang, lying, lustrously white, as a pearl upon the water, he thought it a sight beautiful beyond conceiving.

He had, before leaving London, been furnished with

The wretched old money-huckster leant across the table and snapped his fingers in the Englishman's face.

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sundry letters of introduction, addressed to well-known English people abroad, and it is with one of them in his hand, that he makes his way, by wheelbarrow conveyance, to a certain bungalow on the Sickaway road.

It is the house of the junior member of a large mercantile and banking firm, but now occupied temporarily by a harbour official, and Ewles' object is to procure such information as shall enable him to do the Pekin journey in the right way, and with as little delay as possible.

"Glad to know you, doctor!" said Captain Fearies, the deputy-master of the port. "Harrington tells me that this is quite a romantic expedition of yours. I have to tell *you* that it is, at this particular moment, a most dangerous one."

"Dangerous or not, I must go through with it," replied Ewles, "and as it is essential to its ultimate success that I should be in the capital on or before the 2nd of March, I shall look for your kind help to get me started on the road thither with all speed."

"Certainly, Dr. Ewles; I am at your service, and if you will have your traps brought here from the Custom House, and will make yourself at home with me until to-morrow morning, you shall be quite ready to leave for the North after a six o'clock breakfast."

Ewles, ordinarily a patient man, chafed at even this slight delay. He remembered how that every second of precious time, dropped or wasted, gave so much greater opportunity to his arch enemy to perfect his villainous scheme—if scheme he had—with regard to Haidée Von Cloo—his Haidée.

But at the specified time the next morning, everything was ready for him to leave Shanghai by the Tient-Tsin steamer.

The short passage to the mouth of the Peiho River, was remarkable only for one strange incident.

Among the two dozen or so passengers, was a tall Chinaman, of evident high rank and breeding. He did not mix with his fellow-passengers; perhaps because they were all, without exception, Europeans.

Anyway, he kept aloof, his courteous, dignified air and manner, preventing anything in the shape of unpleasantness and friction.

It was curious, however, that this celestial gentleman, without entering into conversation, or in any way seeking acquaintance, kept in the immediate neighbourhood of Septimus Ewles. Smoking, dining, constitutionalising on deck, the tall Chinaman, like a shadow, was by his side.

So persistent was this, that Ewles began at last to be worried by it, and more than once was on the point of taking steps to put an end to it.

Once, he could have sworn that he heard a noise in his cabin, an hour or so after he had retired. Certainly, as he sprang out of his bunk on to the deck, the door opened and shut suddenly.

By the time he had added something to his pyjamas a search of the corridor was useless—nobody was to be seen about, while the night steward, half-asleep, had neither seen nor heard anything extraordinary.

An indefinable suspicion prompted Ewles to make an examination of his berth.

His most cherished possessions, Haidée's letters, her photo, and a few other oddments, valuable only to a lover, he always carried upon his person; as also his letters of credit and introductions; but there was, of course, much in his baggage which would appeal to the cupidity of the ordinary light-fingered person.

The first thing he saw, upon turning up the swing-amp, was, lying upon the ground at the foot of his big trunk, a piece of narrow silk ribbon—such as would be used by a Chinaman to tie or lace his jacket with. It flashed upon him then that it was of the same colour as the tie-points of the tall celestial's outer garment.

A thorough search through his effects revealed nothing further, and Ewles turned in again, to dream of himself in the character of Sherlock Holmes, hunting down tall Chinamen by means of a violet ribbon clue.

Closely scrutinising, the next morning, the tall celestial, as he passed the deck, his head upon his breast, Ewles saw, to his wonderment, that the violet ribbon tie-points of the other's jacket were *intact, none of them gone.*

Determined, if possible, to get to the bottom of the mystery, Ewles, as he passed the Chinaman, drew out from his own pocket, as if by accident, the incriminating ribbon.

He was almost sure that the other was cunningly observing him from under his eyelids, but as for sign of this or of interest in the plainly displayed ribbon, there was not the faintest.

Thus matters stood until the mouth of the Peiho River was reached. Here, the tall Chinaman dropped into a large sampan, or semi-covered river boat, which under the deft impelling of a couple of long, broad bladed sweeps, quickly ascended the river towards Taku and Tient-Tsin, and was soon out of sight round a bend of the stream.

"Captain," said Ewles, to the captain of the steamer, "Do you know that fellow?"

"That tall yellow-skin? Well, I don't exactly know him; and yet I do, if you can make that out."

"Rather enigmatic; but perhaps you will kindly explain."

"Well, it's like this. About six months ago this same chap first began to make regular trips between Shanghai and this point. He always leaves the vessel in precisely the same unceremonious fashion, and I hear or see nothing more of him again until, perhaps, the next trip but one, and then this sampan meets us, the fellow springs aboard, and, exhibiting to the purser a perpetual pass from the owners, travels with us to Shanghai. What he does there, or at this other end I'm as ignorant as you are, sir, and now you know as much about him as I do, which isn't much."

"No; as you say, captain, it isn't much. But all the same I thank you for your informatory crumbs."

"Welcome, I'm sure."

"What time are we supposed to arrive at Tient-Tsin? I mean, how long does it usually take for the river boat you are expecting, to reach the Forts?"

"Something under six hours."

"Ah! I must be in Pekin by noon of the 2nd March. There will not be much time to lose."

Landing six hours later, Ewles found a Chinaman waiting for him. He had himself made no provision for the meeting, but was not long left in ignorance of how it was done.

"Missa Fleliss—he tellee me to meetee you."

"Tell you, man! why he's miles away."

"Yes! He one piecy big man—he tellee my bludder, one coaly-man on steamer-bloat—bludder tellee me—me tellee you—savee?"

Grinning from ear to ear, the Chinaman bustled about to get the doctor's few things together, and it was not long before the latter found himself located as a bird of passage at the only habitable hotel in Tient-Tsin. This place was kept by a Celestialised Frenchman, a character, and a strange mixture of east and west.

To him Ewles applied for information as to the best and quickest route to Pekin.

"M'sieu!—why you hurry? Everything good at the Hotel de France. Beside, perhaps M'sieu does not know that the Boxeurs are sounding the tocsin in the neighbourhood of the Ming Tombs. The Temple of Tsing-Tsoo is their rendezvous. M'sieu had better remain at the Hotel de France. *Ma foi!* Yes!"

"I leave here to-morrow morning before daybreak. Send in the Chinaman who came with me!"

"Now—what's your name?"

"Lung-How. You wantee me?"

"Yes; can you guide me to Peking?"

"Yes; Missa Fleliss, he tellee me to helpee you—savee?"

In spite of the landlord's protest, and endeavour to detain him in Tient-Tsin, Ewles was determined to press forward.

With Lung-How's assistance horses were secured and before the sun was up the pair were on their way.

There is a railway between Tient-Tsin and Pekin, but Ewles, for his own reasons, decided not to travel by it.

Half-way on their journey a strange thing happened.

Ewles and his guide were resting at mid-day in a small inn by the roadside.

No hing to eat or drink (except tea) is ever provided in these places, so that Lung-How was busy seeing after his master's commissariat.

A pattering of feet upon the road attracted Ewles' attention.

Looking out of the window he sees a litter, closed, attended by four armed Chinamen.

Lung-How also hears the commotion, and comes to see.

No sooner does he set eyes on the armed men than he whispers affrightedly to Ewles.

"Boxer!—Boxer!—all same fightee devils!"

The information does not so much alarm Ewles, as make him curious.

Walking out at the door of the wretched hostelry, he strolls towards the litter for a closer inspection.

Suspecting his intention, the truculent-looking attendants close round, crossing their spears and matchlocks by way of forcible prevention.

At this moment, and quite suddenly, one side of the litter is violently shaken, and moved back a little. A small white hand is seen vainly trying to move it further.

"I believe," said Ewles to himself, "that something wrong is going on here; but what can I do? these fellows would raise the neighbourhood if I lifted a finger."

The chief of the band perceiving the slightly opened side of the litter, made as if to close it, hitting the hand which still gripped the shutter a blow with his gun-stock.

A woman's cry, half-smothered, rang out.

"Good Heavens! Haidée!" shouted Ewles, endeavouring to break through the cordon.

Ewles fired at Crafte, who, throwing up his arms, fell backwards.

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But before he could reach the litter, a hoarse command was given; the litter was lifted by the four bearers, and, while Ewles was struggling vainly with the Boxers, who had him at a disadvantage in an angle of the yard wall, soon disappeared down a side lane leading off the main road.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRET OF THE MING TOMBS BY THE GREAT WALL.

THE chief topic of conversation at the English Club in Legation Street, Pekin, at this time was the story of a new Boxer rising.

Said old Major Strangeways, "We are no sooner well through one trouble of this sort, than another is threatened—it's monstrous!"

"Ah! and that isn't all of it," remarked a smart-looking attaché—"You haven't heard, perhaps, that there is Yankee money behind the rascals."

"No!" exploded the Major. "I haven't; but I shou dn't be surprised."

"Oh! it's nothing to do with uncle Sam in his official capacity. It seems that there is an immensely rich Chicago man who, for some purpose of his own, is furnishing the rebels with funds. It is said that he is personally active in the affair, and that he moves about the country in the disguise of a Chinaman."

"God bless me!" said a grey-haired Secretary of Legation, nervously. "Do you think there's anything in it, Charteris?"

"Well, honestly, I do—Eh!" to the club-servant, who had handed him a card and a letter, "excuse me, gent'emen!"

Glancing at the card, and then opening and reading the letter, the young diplomatist bade them show in the stranger.

"Dr. Ewles! I am delighted to know you!. These two gentlemen are Major Strangeways, of His Majesty's 7th Hussars, and Sir Cecil Wray, our Secretary of Legation. Gentlemen, this is Dr. Septimus Ewles of London, who brings me a letter from my old friend Harrington."

After a desultory talk for a quarter of an hour, Charteris was asked to repeat for their visitor's benefit, the current rumour of the anticipated Boxer rising.

"Yes," the narrator concluded, "and to crown it all the man is strongly suspected of kidnapping an English lady who was known to have called at the consulate in Tient-Tsin, but who has since mysteriously disappeared. We are in possession of certain information from a tainted source, it is true, which almost makes this certain."

"Mr. Charteris," said Ewles earnestly (he had been listening with eager ears to the tale). "May I put a question or two to you?"

"A hundred, my dear sir."

"Well, then; in view of the certainty of your information as to the action of this pseudo Chinaman; this—Yankee Boxer—have you decided to take any steps to bring him to book?"

"Yes—we have; we know that the chief Boxer conspirators meet in the precincts of the temple of Ts ng-Tsoo, among the Ming Tombs, thirty miles north o' Pekin."

"Yes; and having that knowledge, what do you propose?"

"A party are starting to-night after sundown, with the object, if possible, of trapping this American dabbler in Chine e politics and British interests."

"Good! Now, will you let me (I have strong, very strong reasons for asking the favour) will you let me accompany the expedition?"

"Assuredly! Remain here for dinner, and come afterwards to the Legation with me. I am going myself."

By this time the Major and the Secretary were gone, and the two who were left talked long and earnestly together over their meal.

At last Charteris said, "Doctor, I honour your pluck and I only hope the result of it all may be as happy as you can desire it to be."

* * * * *

It is a wonderful place that where lies the dust of the old Ming dynasty of China.

For some distance around it, and especially towards its Southern approach, the landscape is desolation itself.

Sheer out of the barren, stone-strewed ground, rise at intervals colossal figures carved in stone of men and animals.

Though wide apart they form a striking avenue to the Temple of Tsing-Tsoo, which stands grim and solitary at the end of it.

Along this road, about an hour after midnight, a party of eight Europeans, accompanied by two Legation interpreters, and Ewles' attendant, rode silently and swiftly.

With almost criminal negligence the conspirators had omitted to provide sentries or scouts of any kind, so that the party approached to quite within the shadow of the Temple walls, without creating any suspicion of their presence.

The Tombs themselves lie at the base of a semi-circle of hills, which has something like a three mile radius.

"Now," said Charteris quietly, "the entrance to the underground vault, where our informant, a traitor, tells us the meeting is even now in progress, is just by the left side of the main flight of steps. Oh! there it is! That black hole!"

They all moved up close to it.

"Six men, including 'Our American Cousin,'" he continued, "are in conclave. I think we can manage them—what say you?"

Universal assent.

"Hark!" hoarsely whispered Ewles suddenly. "What is that?"

"I heard nothing," said Charteris.

"There it is again! It is the same cry I heard by the way!"

"I hear it now! But it comes from above, in the building where the monks are."

"You," said Ewles, tightening his belt, and loosening his revolver in its pocket, "you go on, I am going to search for the owner of that voice."

He was gone before they could expostulate with him, Lung-How paddling quickly after his master.

Charteris then massed his men and dived with them into the dark abyss.

So dark was it that they had each one to feel with their hands the right side of the rocky passage; one of the interpreters acting as guide.

In this fashion they went on for at least a quarter of a mile, when a dim light was visible about two hundred yards ahead.

"Not a whisper," scarcely breathed Charteris.

They could hear voices now in murmuring conversation.

The light was caused by a door at the end of the passage being about six inches ajar.

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Charteris crept up to it, and cautiously looked into a sort of rock-hewn room, or cave, round an immense block of black stone in the centre of which were grouped a party of six men.

It was a tall figure, clad in Chinese garments, and standing full in the circle of light made by a hanging lamp of intense power, suspended by metal chains from the roof of the cave, that principally attracted the attention of Charteris. The features, he fancied, appeared to be more western than eastern of type, Yet, what could a European, or civilised white, be doing among these Chinese fiends?

It was a riddle not long in the reading.

With an imperious gesture of his right hand, the man began a rapid, semi-angry speech. He spoke in colloquial Chinese, which Charteris understood, but which, for the benefit of the many is translated as follows:—

"This, mind!" he said, "is my last contribution to your cause, unless you carry out the scheme of total extirpation of the official British and their following. The Tient-Tsin business of last year must not be repeated; it must now be death, and nothing short of death, for every member of the British Legation.

"My money it was—to the tune of more than three million dollars—that was wasted upon a failure, remember! but this million, which is now to do the work then left undone, must not go the same way!—mark that! Every dollar of it must fulfil its mission. Now, Yung-Su, what are your plans?"

Yung-Su, a villainous-looking Chinaman of dwarf-like stature, but with arms so disproportionately long that the hands reached the ground almost, climbed up, lightning quick, on to the stone top, bringing his fiendish face close to the last speaker's.

"Death! Within five days from now every Englishman in China will be a corpse! I swear it! We all swear it! Speak, Li-Tsee! Hung-Wung! Ah-Sheng! Tell the American excellency!—the Gold King!—blood!—blood!—blood! will flow before the next moon shall be born."

"Good!" said the tall Chinaman with the Yankee twang. "I am satisfied."

It is doubtful whether Charteris would have precipitated matters, and forced the citadel so soon, but for an altogether unexpected development.

The last words were scarce out of the leading conspirator's mouth, when, from a hole in the rock, Ewles, bearing in his arms an inanimate female form, burst in upon the assembled six.

Charteris, seeing that the crucial moment had arrived, gave the signal, and, with his men, flung open the door, and called upon the conspirators to surrender.

"Siever Crafte!" cried Ewles, seeing that his companions were in a position to support him. "You have reached the end of your tether! I know your villainy to its lowest depths. You must answer to me now for years of torture and nameless misery."

"Answer!—to you!" cried Crafte, flinging off all disguise, "Do you think I have thrown the die to lose the game? Loose the girl!"

His attention to Ewles had thrown him off his guard; for Charteris, creeping up behind him, threw himself upon him, and dragged him backward to the ground.

Meanwhile the other Europeans had overpowered the five Boxers, who, cowards ever, showed no fight.

Charteris, an old athlete. held on with a grip of steel. The end, however, might have been worse than the beginning.

"Siever Crafte! Will you answer me one question?" said Ewles.

"No!"

With the word, he wrenched himself free of Charteris, and drawing a long Malay kreese from his bosom, sought to plunge it into his enemy's heart.

Ewles, as if intuitively prepared for this, fired at Crafte, who, throwing up his arms, fell, face backwards, across the stone slab.

* * * * *

At the English consul's, at Tient-Tsin, Haidée told her lover how that she, for his sake, had followed Crafte from London. At Shanghai she heard, quite by accident, of his dealings with the Boxers.

It was while travelling the open country between Tient-Tsin and the neighbourhood of the Ming Tombs that Crafte had kidnapped her, taking her by litter to the Temple of Tsing-Tsoo, where his influence with the Buddhist priests there enabled him to get her immured in one of the lamasary cells.

These cells communicated by an underground passage with the cave where the conspirators met.

Crafte evidently hoped to persuade Haidée to his will, and it was only the timely intervention of the Legation people which prevented it.

What advantage he hoped to reap by financing the Boxers, is, or was, best known to himself. His death destroyed the hopes of his friends, for, as it transpired, the promised million had not been actually paid over to the confederacy.

* * * * *

At a quiet little house on the borders of Wimbledon Common, Septimus Ewles and his wife lead an ideal existence.

By common consent they never refer to those events which, though they brought them together, were fraught with peril and misery unspeakable.

Septimus Ewles is working up a nice little practice in and around Putney and Roehampton, but the flesh-pots of Egypt have no reminiscent attraction for him; he lives for his love, for his revenge is satisfied.

* * * * *

Concluding note by Dr. Ewles.

"My friend, Inspector Ryan, has lately discovered that the woman who accompanied Crafte from Charing Cross Station, and who was so strangely like my Haidée, proceeded no further than Calais with her companion. She has herself, only a day or two ago, just before she succumbed to heart-failure, in a ward of St. Andrew's Hospital, confessed to Collings and Ryan that Siever Crafte engaged her from a London theatre to leave England with him in order to create an impression that it was Haidée. Crafte saw Ryan at the station, and took every means to make the situation as public as possible."

RALPH ENDERBY.

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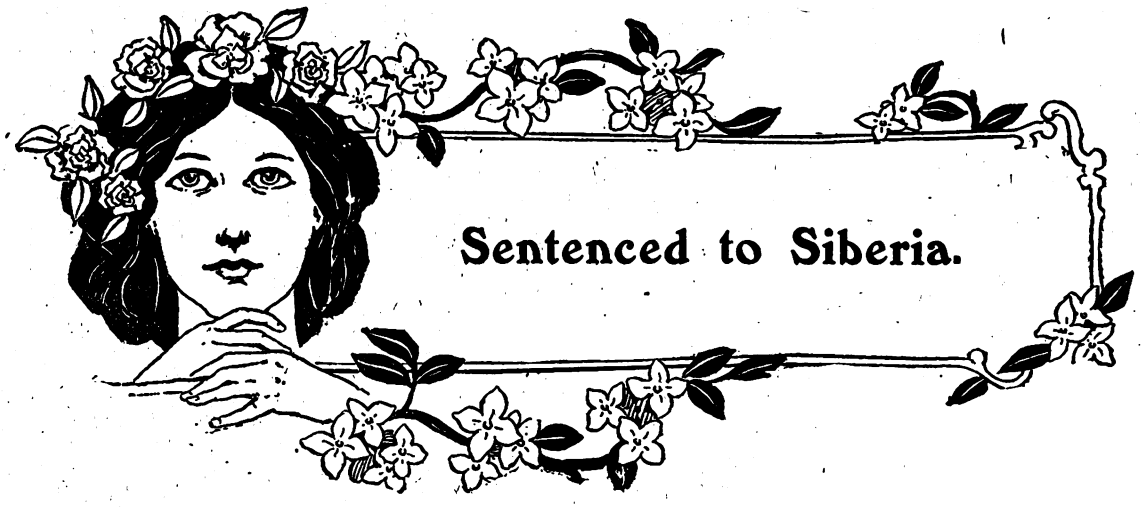

Sentenced to Siberia.

"SIBERIA? I have had five-and-twenty years in Siberia."

So said my fellow passenger. We were on board a Petersburg and Hull steamer; we were passing down the gulf of Finland, and the low fortifications of Cronstadt were growing more and more indistinct in the distance. We were sitting on deck he and I, each with the fraternal pipe in his mouth, and were getting through the preliminary stages of acquaintanceship-making. Passengers are few and far between on these liners, and one has to make the most one may of such as the gods think well to send. Plainly this smoking companion of mine did not spring from the educated classes. His was not a refined face; though, so far as the pit-marks, with which it was liberally tattooed, would permit one to see, it was an intelligent, and not an unkindly one. He was unusually big and strongly-built, and though in the downhill of life would still have been an ugly opponent in a tussle. His dress, and personal appearance generally, indicated the well-to-do man. Even to those who know something of Western Russia, "Siberia" has an awful and mysterious sound, and the experiences of one who had spent a quarter of a century in the Czar's great prison-house, must be worth the hearing. I proposed to myself to cultivate my big acquaintance.

Had he, I asked, seen anything of convict life? He was of opinion that a man could not well live where he had lived without seeing something of it. Was that life as dreadful as English novel-writers represented it, and as English people generally supposed it to be? My fellow passenger was no reader of novels, and had been too long from home to know what English people generally thought; but he could tell me a thing or two that had come under his own notice, and I might judge for myself.

Nothing, I assured him, would give me greater pleasure than to listen.

"I am a Lancashire man," said my big friend, "and I rose from the ranks. I began life much as other mill-hands do; but my head was set the right way on my shoulders, and I got to be an overlooker. Five-and-twenty years ago, when a great English firm, whose operations extend over many parts of Russia, started a cotton-mill at Ekaterinburg, I was offered a post as manager. Ekaterinburg is, as I dare say you know, on the Siberian side of the Ural mountains, and in the heart of the Government mining districts. A man thinks twice before he transports himself and his family to such a place, but I had made up my mind to get on, and this was a good chance for one in my position.

"I was not disappointed. I looked well after the mill, and it prospered. We north country operatives are a thrifty folk, and like living in a plain way. I saved money, and as it was the policy of our firm to keep me in my post, and to give me a personal interest in the undertaking, I was allowed to invest my few hundreds of roubles in the mill.

"These common-place particulars about my own affairs can have very little interest for you, sir. I only tell them because otherwise you would scarcely understand what has to follow.

"One evening, late in our short Russian summer, when the long days were fast drawing in, we were in our family sitting-room, I engaged with some of the mill accounts, and my wife with her sewing, when Lottie, our eldest daughter, rushed in, and, without a word, fainted right away on the floor.

"This did not more frighten my wife and myself than it surprised us, for Lottie was a sensible girl, and had never given way to any hysterical fancies before. We knew that it must have taken a good deal to upset her in that way, and as soon as we had contrived to bring her round, we made her tell us what had been the matter.

"It seemed that she had been alone in her room, when, turning suddenly towards the window, she became aware of a face pressed closely against the glass and glaring at her. What the face was like she was unable to describe, but it had appeared too ugly and horrible for a human being. If it could have been called that of a man or woman, she said, she should not have been so frightened.

"I went out and looked round the house. Nothing

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was to be seen. We knew Lottie to be a sensible girl, but we were inclined to think that her fancy must have played her a trick for once.

"After a time my wife left the room to see about our supper. My wife (she has been dead now this nine years) had as strong nerves as any woman that I ever knew—nothing ever seemed to knock her off her balance. Well, she came back in a minute or two, and beckoned me to the door. She was calm enough, but I could see by her face that something was wrong. She would not say what she had to say before the girl for fear of frightening her again. So she whispered to me outside. 'Lottie must have been right, there *is* something about. When I opened the door of the *kladovoy*' (the larder, that is) 'I heard something at the window. Whatever it may have been it took the alarm, and did not let me see it; but it has left its marks on the lattice.'

"I followed her silently to the *kladovoy*. All was now quiet there. I examined the *fortochka*—as in Russia we call the little window of such a place. In summer-time its glass casement was removed, and it was now only protected by a lattice of crossed strips of fir-wood. These strips were slightly displaced, as if someone had tried to force them out, and thus to gain entrance. The *fortochka* was about large enough to have admitted the body of a man.

"Nothing was to be seen by looking out; for though a reasonable amount of twilight still remained, it was only enough to show things with any distinctness in the open, and I had sheltered the back of our house by planting a number of young fir trees. I whispered to my wife that she should go back to Lottie, and that I would stay where I was for a bit, and see whether the robber—if it were a robber—would come again.

"It was scarcely to be called late, yet it was too late for any of our mill people to be about, and they were our only neighbours. Indeed, we had no near neighbours. My house, and one adjoining it (intended for another *employé*, but at that time unoccupied), stood partly within the high wooden fence which inclosed the mill; that is, their backs opened into the inclosure (the *dvor*, as we call it), whilst their fronts looked on a public thoroughfare. Thus our back premises were strictly private after the gates to the mill had been closed, and the person—if it was a person—who had got to the windows must either have secreted himself within the *dvor*, or have gained access to it in some improper manner. Now, however, all was still as could be.

"Down I sat to watch, close by the door of the *kladovoy*. I chose a dark corner, and one where, in the dusk, it would have been a hard matter to see me, but I had a full view of the lattice. I waited until my patience was beginning to wear out, and then fancied that I heard some slight sound outside under the *fortochka*. It was so slight that at first I was not sure whether it might not be merely fancy, but after a little pause I heard it again, louder, and more distinctly. I sat still as a mouse, and kept a sharp look out.

"Slowly and gradually something raised itself before the opening. It was a head; but in the uncertain light I could not say whether it was a human head, or that of some brute creature. Whichever it might be, I could see enough of it to know that it was such a wild, haggard, unearthly-looking thing as I had never looked upon before. Any quantity of shaggy hair was hanging about it, and its only features to speak of seemed to be eyes. Eyes it had past all mistake. Never did I see anything like the way in which it glared at our good provisions within. I have seen what a famished wolf looks like, and should hardly think a famished wolf worth comparing with that creature. It was ravenous after what it saw. Up beside the head came two bunches of long claws, which wrenched at the wooden lattice as if to tear it down. But they were too weak. The strips held fast. And then the thing fell to with its teeth to gnaw a way through.

"Whilst the creature was thus engaged, I contrived to slip quietly from my dark corner by the door, and catching up a big stick, went out at the back of the house. I stole round as noiselessly as I could towards the window. There were, as I said, young fir trees on that side of the house, so that with a little care it was not difficult to approach the place unobserved. When I got to within a few yards, I saw that the man—for the creature was a man—was still hard at work, trying to force a way in.

"I dropped my stick and made a rush at him, and had him before he knew anything about it. He did not give up quietly. He struggled hard—desperately, I may say. But, bless you, he'd not the ghost of a chance with me. I am a tolerably strong man still, as men go, and I was younger then; I could have undertaken three such as he, and thought nothing of it. The poor wretch had no sort of condition about him—he was mere skin and bones—no muscle at all. He was nothing but a walking anatomy, with a few rags by way of covering—and only a very few.

"All that he gained by his struggles was a good shaking, for I gave him one that made every tooth in his head chatter, and then I laid him flat on his back.

"I had been long enough in the country to gain some knowledge of Russ. I could use it pretty freely to our mill people; and I must own that for terms in which to blackguard a set of lazy rascals, as most of those fellows are, Billingsgate isn't a patch on it. So I could make my prisoner understand me. 'Now then, my friend,' I said to him, 'you needn't take the trouble to show any more fight. You see it won't pay. So just get up and march quietly off with me to the *ouchastock*'—the *ouchastock* being, as you perhaps know, equivalent to the police-station in English.

"But instead of getting up and doing as he was told, like a reasonable being, the creature contrived to wriggle itself upon its knees, and to hold up its hands, while it begged of me in the name of the virgin and all the saints not to hand it over to the *politzia*. It would rather be killed outright, and was ready to be beaten as much as I pleased.

"'My ragged friend,' I said, 'you are queer chap! Why do you object to the police so strongly?'

"The poor wretch made no direct answer, but only reiterated his intreaties that I would not give him up. I began to have some suspicion of the quality of my guest. 'I am inclined to think,' I said, 'that you are neither more nor less than an escaped convict.'

"Instead of attempting to deny it, he only begged me to pity him, as before.

"Russian law is terribly hard on those who in any way assist in or conceal the escape of a convict. Of that I was aware. But though I am a big fellow to look at, and in some things can hold my own as well as any man, I have always been a poor, soft-hearted fool in others. I was beginning to feel downright sorry for that poor creature—it was not so much his prayers that fetched me, as his looks. 'Well,' I said, 'suppose I don't give you up, but let you go. What then?'

"He would always remember me with gratitude. He would go on his way at once, and do no harm to my property. He was no thief. He had only entered

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this *dvor*—this yard, to hide himself, but that the sight of food had overcome him; he was famishing, but he dared not beg. He had walked, how far he could not tell, perhaps a thousand versts, and all the way he had not dared to ask for food, scarcely to speak to a living soul. He was trying to reach his own village, perhaps a thousand versts farther. If I would only set him free he would go on at once.

"That was about the substance of the fellow's answer. His appearance seemed to bear out his statements, and I was inclined to believe him. 'It's sheer nonsense,' I said, 'for you to talk of setting off for a walk of a thousand versts, if I let you go. You might as well talk of flying. You have not the strength to walk ten. You would only fall by the roadside, you miserable scarecrow, and die in a ditch. I should be doing the kinder thing by you if I handed you over to the authorities. If I do let you go, I must give you something to eat first. Come with me.'

"The miserable wretch hardly believed that I really meant to feed him, and would have run away had he dared. I took him into the empty house, of which I had the key, and fetched him as much food as I thought it safe for him to eat.

"So there I was, with an escaped convict on my hands. Had I been more prudent I should have reflected that the fellow was most likely a hardened scoundrel, quite undeserving of pity, and that his gratitude would probably be shown either by robbing me, or, if he should happen to fall into the hands of the police, by getting me into trouble to save his own worthless neck. I ought to have thought of these things; but, as I said before, I am a soft-hearted, old fool, and neglected to do so.

"I kept him in that empty house for several days; in fact, till he had so far recovered his strength as to be fit to go on. Nobody knew about him, not even the members of my own family, for if I was doing a foolish thing, I had sense enough to run as little risk over it as possible. Feodor Stepanovitch, for that my convict told me was his name, enlightened me on some few points of his personal history. His native village was, he said, in the government of Vladimir, and he had left it to get work in the town of Ivanova, where there are factories. Every man tries to make out a good case for himself, so I did not feel myself bound to place implicit reliance on Feodor's statement that he had never committed anything that could properly be called a crime. According to his showing, the sole source of his troubles had been a difference with an *ouvadnik*—a police agent. I do not exactly remember the particulars, but, of course, there was a woman in the business; blows had passed, and the *ouvadnik* had, by a false charge, procured Feodor's condemnation to Siberia for life. This, I say, was *his* story.

"Feodor told me that his place of exile had been somewhere far up the country; and of the severities he had had to endure, and of the tyranny of officials, he spoke bitterly. After making his escape the privations and dangers he had undergone before reaching Ekaterinburg, were such as I should not have believed from his words, had they not been verified by his appearance.

"For a Russian he appeared to me to be a not unintelligent fellow, and I pointed out to him the difficulties he would find in making his way to Ivanova—a distance of not less than twelve hundred versts from Ekaterinburg, as the crow flies, and advised him, as he was used to mill work, to stay and find employment where he was. I was weak enough to offer to help him, and see what could be done in the way of getting a passport for him. But the fellow was bent on going forward. He was resolved, he said, to see his family again, and he was resolved to see Basil Makaroff. This Makaroff was, I found, the *ouvadnik* to whom Feodor attributed his troubles, and it seemed to me that this particular hankering to see this person meant a craving to have his revenge. I confess that when I heard this much, I felt no desire to detain my friend Feodor longer than was necessary. I was glad to give him something more decent in the way of clothing than he had brought, and a trifle in money to help him on his way, and to be rid of him.

"I never expected to see him again, nor wished to do so; and I was somewhat startled when, a few weeks later, among a gang of convicts which were being marched by a guard of soldiers out of the town on their way eastward, I recognised Stepanovitch. I was standing close by when he passed, and was so much surprised to see him, that I somewhat imprudently, perhaps, spoke to him by name. But, will you believe it?—the ungrateful dog stared me in the face, and marched sullenly by without word or sign of recognition. 'So much,' thought I, 'for gratitude!'

"Some months later, when the next summer was getting well advanced, we had one night an alarm of fire. Many of the newer mills at Ekaterinburg are of stone, but the main building of ours, being comparatively old, was of wood. It was a thing to blaze up like a box of matches. It was not, however, in the main building that the fire had broken out, but in some sheds connected with the main building by a range of outbuildings. This last was stone-built, but as ill-luck would have it, covered with wooden shingles.

"A good many people were soon together, mostly our own hands, and I directed and encouraged them as well as I could to get the fire under. But they are a stolid, heavy set of fellows, those Russians, and the way in which they take care not to over-exert themselves at a fire is enough to drive an Englishman wild. Yet there some few who worked well, and one fellow in particular, I noticed, a ragged fellow, a beggar I took him to be, who really worked splendidly, and in a way that ought to have made many of those whose daily bread depended on the existence of the mill, ashamed of themselves.

"What between the apathy of those lazy scoundrels generally, and want of water, it was soon plain that the sheds which were on fire could not be saved, and that what we had to look to was the mill itself. The danger of the main building was increasing every moment, for the fire was beginning to make its way along the shingled roof of which I spoke.

"I could see what had to be done—those shingles had to be stripped off. I had a ladder reared against the building, and called for volunteers to mount it. The height of that roof from the ground was considerable, and the fire was every moment getting more and more hold upon it. To strip off the shingles would be a hard job, and a hot one, and it is not to be denied, a dangerous one. Not one of those cold-blooded rascals who had eaten our bread for years would come forward. I stood at the foot of the ladder, and told them I was going up myself. I offered twenty roubles—fifty roubles—to any man who would help me. But it was of no use.

"Just when I was about to mount alone, the ragged stranger fellow, whom I had before observed working so vigorously, came running up. He had been too busy in another place to know what was going forward

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sooner. That was scarcely a time for taking any particular notice of people's looks, yet I had an impression that he was not altogether a stranger to me.

"He looked up to the roof. The delay of those few minutes had given a fearful advantage to the fire. 'There is death up there,' he said, 'Is saving this mill so *very* important to you.'

"'If it is burnt I am a beggar. Every *kopeck* I am worth is in it. A hundred roubles if you will help me to save it!'

"'We can talk of the reward afterwards,' he said, as he sprang past me, and up the ladder like a cat.

"I was following, too eagerly, perhaps, to be careful, and I am a heavy man. A round broke, and down I came, with a knee so much twisted that I could scarcely stand. It was no longer in my power to climb to the roof.

"But from where I propped myself up against a wall, I could see that ragged fellow, who was up and doing enough for three or four ordinary men. You should have seen how he sent the shingles rattling down. Seen from below he seemed at times to be working with fire all round him, but he went on without minding it. I never saw an Englishman—let alone a Russian—go to it with a better will. I heard the people round me say that that he worked more like a fiend than a mortal man—and so he did. He handled the burning wood as though his fingers had been iron instead of flesh and blood, and scarcely seemed to shrink from the flames that blazed up round his face. He never appeared to rest or stay for breath till he had succeeded in cutting off the communication between the fire and the mill.

"I made the men below set the ladder as handily as they could for him to get down, and he did his best to reach it. But he must have been quite used up, besides being pretty much blinded and suffocated with the smoke. Anyway, he lost his footing and down he went through the rafters, and crashed among the burning rubbish below. It was an ugly fall.

"We got him out as well as we could, and such a scorched, smoke-blackened, smashed-up copy of God's image I should never wish to see again. But he was still alive, and to the proposal to carry him straight to the hospital I said; 'No; take him into my house.' So they took him in.

"After we had got the fire quite under, and made all safe about the mill, I limped to the side of the bed where they had laid the poor fellow. He had come round a bit by that time. He tried to open his eyes, but it seemed to me that the fire and smoke had not left him much power of seeing with them. He spoke, however, more distinctly than might have been expected, and his first question was whether the mill was safe.

"I told him that owing to his pluck it was. I was surprised to find that he recognised my voice, and still more when he heard my name. 'You do not know me,' he said, and, indeed, it was not likely that anyone should know such a crushed and shapeless mass of cinder as he was—'You do not know me—Feodor Setpanovitch. They caught me, and took me back. I knew you when you spoke to me in the street, but I dared not answer lest they should suspect you of having befriended me. I have escaped from them again, and am going home to Ivanova. I must see my wife, and that villain Makaroff.'

"He lay a little, and then added, 'I am glad I was here to help you to-night. I am glad they did not take me again before I got here. I do not think the *politzia* will take me again.'

"And they did not, for he was dead within an hour of that time.

"That, sir, is the end of my story of a Siberiak. Do you happen to have a light handy? for, somehow, I have let my pipe out. And, bless me, my pipe-bowl is quite wet. I believe I'm crying. What an old ass I am!"

E. T. W.

Vanden Bussche's Ride.

MANY fat people assert that they have small appetites, but I am sure that my good friend, Mons. Vanden Bussche, has an enormous one, is extremely fond of eating and possesses an excellent digestion. As a boy he a acquired the nickname of the "gargantua," and he always appreciated an invitation to dine out.

Several years ago, Monsieur Vanden Bussche's wife fell heir, through the demise of the Baron Snoy, her father, to considerable property in the neighbourhood of Antwerp. This made it necessary for Vanden Bussche to leave the English city where he was then living, and betake himself to the land of his birth. A certain acquaintance of his, named Whitelaw, a tall, gaunt Scotchman, having business in the same part of the world, they determined to travel together. In the course of the trip they found themselves one dark, rainy day, in sleepy, time-stained, mud-coloured, out-of-date, Mechlin, in an ancient inn with sanded floors, candles, feather beds, and stolid Flemish servants, who looked so stupid, that Whitelaw declared that he didn't feel sure whether he ought to address them in front or back.

At the moment of which I write, Vanden Bussche was alone in his room, on the second floor of the hostelry. He held in his hand an open letter, and a broad grin illumined his jolly countenance as he read. Before he had quite finished, Whitelaw came in. Vanden Bussche instantly tossed aside the letter, and falling on the neck of the astonished Scotsman, whirled him round, shouting in his ear:

"Good! Excellent! Superb news, my friend!"

"Oh, get off my neck, man, and tell me what ails you in plain English," answered Whitelaw, shaking himself loose.

"Well, zen, my dear sair, I haf a lettaire from my friend Zeger inviting us both to dine with heem to-night."

"Bless your soul, man, is that all?"

"All! But I forgif you—you come from Scotland, where they bring you up on oatmeal and finnan—what you call dem?—hatties. Wait, my dear sair, till you

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eat a dinnair Belgique!" And he kissed the tips of his fat fingers and raised his eyes ecstatically to the ceiling.

"We'd best be preparing, then. At what time does you friend dine?"

"At sex."

"Dress suits?"

"Certainement."

"They'll have to be pressed. I'll call the garsong."

He rang the bell, and then both men dived into their trunks and brought forth "swallow-tails" and trousers.

"Parbleu!" exclaimed Vanden Bussche promptly, "ze eau de Cologne has itself spilt over everysing in my carpet bag."

"Let's see," said Whitelaw, stepping over. "Good gracious, man, what will you do? You can't go smelling like a perfumery shop."

"No," answered Vanden Bussche, dolefully, but even as he said it his face brightened. "Oh, zat makes nosing. I send heem to ze tailor and he ze smell will take out like zis!" and he snapped his fat fingers gaily and hurried to the door to admit the boy who had just knocked, gave him the necessary instructions about the garments, and told him to order a carriage for them at 5.30.

It took what seemed to Vanden Bussche an interminable time to make those dress suits presentable, although he had beguiled the interval by composing a toast. Speech-making was a well-known weakness of his. He had rendered his present production with great unction several times for the benefit of Whitelaw, and was beginning for the fourth time, when that abused individual begged him to desist, whereupon he took to pacing the floor excitedly, muttering to himself.

"Zat is always my luck, when zaire is a fine dinnaire somesing mus' happen to my clothes. Confound it! Why haf Zepherine gif me zat bottle of Cologne? I'll not go, zat's all zere is about it!" Then in a pathetically dismal tone, "I'll stay here and eat ze table d'hote."

"Upon my word, I'll dine elsewhere if you contemplate any such trick as that, Vanden Bussche." This from Whitelaw.

Taking no notion of the interruption, Vanden Bussche continued impatiently: "Zese tailors, zey do it on purpose, so zat they can charge a big price! A whole hour to take ze Cologne out of ze clothes! It is one outrage!"

Scarcely were these words uttered than a loud rapping announced the arrival of the garments, which in a jiffy were donned, and the two travellers hurried down to the carriage.

"Climb upon your seat, man; we are in a hurry," commanded Vanden Bussche, speaking to the driver.

Whitelaw entered the carriage, while Vanden Bussche gave the man the address, and promised extra fare if he got them to their destination by six o'clock; then he sprang into the vehicle, and slammed the door after him. Horrors! Crash! Crack! Bang! As the weighty Vanden Bussche stepped in, the bottom of the coach fell out, precipitating himself and Whitelaw on to the cobble-stones.

"*Arretez! Arretez!*" howled the Belgian, recovering his feet as quickly as possible.

"Help! Stop the horses!" bawled Whitelaw. But the horses did not stop, and no help came. On the contrary, they seemed to go faster than ever. And passers-by, had there been any, could have seen a pair of short, fat legs, and a pair of long thin one going at double-quick time under the coach.

"Ooooh!" groaned Whitelaw. "My legs! I knock hem against those confounded axles with every move."

"Take shorter steps," suggested Vanden Busschee "That is nosing to what haf happen to me. I has forgot—my—speech!" he panted.

"Confound your speech!" muttered his companion in misery. "You don't expect to eat that dinner, do you?"

"Oh! if we keep running like zis we will get zare," answered Vanden Bussche amiably.

"Which I don't propose to do. Hello, there! Cocher! Cocher! Cocher!" shouted the Scotchman, and with each exclamation he banged more forcibly on the front of the carriage. Still onward they went, faster and faster than ever, and anon they could hear the driver cracking his whip noisily, and urging his galloping steeds to still greater exertions.

"A pretty looking sight we'll be when we do get there," the Scotchman managed to gasp.

"Oh, Zeger will pardon us; he is very amiable," consoled Vanden Bussche breathlessly.

"How—far—does—the—wretched—man—live—anyway?"

"Oh! about zree miles, I zink."

Whitelaw groaned.

Vanden Bussche made an effort to feel in the pocket of his coat tail, and nearly fell

"Hold on, man!" cried his friend, grabbing him "Don't mind your handkerchief now. Blow your nose—anywhere."

"It's not my handkerchief; it's my speech," was the reply.

"For the love of Heaven, Van, don't mention that speech again! I'll kill you if you do, on my honour!"

"But I'm afraid I haf forgotten to remember eet," grumbled Vanden Bussche.

Hardly had he uttered these words than the carriage stopped with a jerk, and the two sprinters within suddenly and forcibly sat down in the mud.

"We are zere!" exclaimed Vanden Bussche.

"The dickens we are!" growled Whitelaw, as he angrily scrambled to his feet and burst open the door of the coach, bent upon wiping up the earth with the offending cabby.

"Oh, let heem alone; we will be late to ze dinner," entreated Vanden Bussche, dragging Whitelaw away. Then, so the man, "Begone, or I'll hand you over to the police!"

The two friends turned and saw before them the white front of a pretty country house. Whitelaw noticed that not a single light was visible, and Vanden Bussche looked puzzled. Nevertheless they both approached the door, and the Belgian rang the bell. After some minutes it was opened by a man with a lighted candle in his hand. Vanden Bussche asked for Monsieur Zeger.

"Monsieur Zeger," answered the man has a town house. He gives a dinner this evening to a gentleman from England."

"I am he," remarked Vanden Bussche. "I was not aware that Monsieur Zeger had a town house."

"He had not until recently," answered the man. "I am going there now with some wine, and can take Messieurs if they desire it."

Vanden Bussche accepted at once, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friend. On arriving, the valet soon made them presentable, and though late for the first course, they enjoyed the remainder of the feast. Vanden Bussche, instead of his speech, gave an amusing account of their mad race inside the floorless carriage.

C. DOCHEZ.

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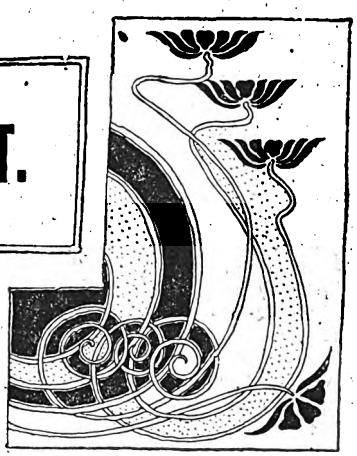
HIS DEATH-WARRANT.



A Story of a Newspaper Reporter

"It was in the north some years ago," remarked the city editor. "We had a man on the paper who was simply a crank on homicides, and he was more than a mere reporter, for he had detective talent of the highest order. He didn't care much for the common crimes—burglaries, larcenies, and such—but give him a good, mysterious murder and he was splendid. Not only did he have the history of all the famous murderers at his fingers' ends, but he delighted in ferreting out the most mysterious crimes that came within our province. In every case except the one I am telling about—and there were a good many crimes in that town—he traced out the murderer before the detectives even dreamt of his identity.

"I have since thought the secret of his success was that he put himself mentally in the place of the murderer and reasoned it out from motives rather than from the clues of the ordinary detective.

"'There is seldom much method in murder,' he once said to me when in a rarely communicative mood. "'Most men would commit it in about the same way under the same circumstances. It is only when a murderer goes about it systematically, as do the Thugs of India, that a murder becomes truly mysterious.'

"I once asked him why he did not become a regular detective.

"'I was born and bred a journalist,' he said, 'and the habit is too strong to break.'

"That was literally true in his case. Otherwise I might not have to tell this story.

"One morning the body of a fine looking man was found in an alley adjoining the electric light works in the very heart of the town. The afternoon papers had a chance at it, but didn't make much out of it, so I at once assigned it to Jones, as we will call him. Although he did not show up at the usual hour, I had no doubt he was already at work on it, as it was as mysterious a case as even he could desire.

"The victim was identified as a traveller who had just arrived, and so far as was known he had no friends or acquaintances in the town. It was not a case of robbery, for all his money and valuables were left on his body. There was a slight contusion on the back of the head and a small, needle-like hole through the man's heart. It was especially strange that such a crime could have been committed in a public thoroughfare while there was absolutely no clue to the murderer or his motive.

"But these difficulties were only such as would ordinarily put Jones on his mettle, so I did not doubt that he would have a good account of the affair. I was therefore somewhat surprised when he came sneaking in about six o'clock in the evening to see what his assignment was. He looked worn and haggard, but denied that he was ill, so I gave him the murder job. He went out without a word.

"I did not see him again that evening. About midnight I began to wonder why I had not heard from him, but only speculated on the possibility of something having happened to him, for the idea that he could possibly fail never occurred to me. Finally, after an hour had gone by, I telephoned to the police station. Word came back that there were no new developments in the case, and that Jones had not been there. Sending two men out to hunt him up, I set to work myself to make a story of the murder from the afternoon papers. Just then Jones came in. His step was unsteady and his face flushed. He had evidently been drinking heavily, something I never knew him to do before, but he was not drunk; rather he seemed at high nervous tension, although outwardly as calm as ever.

"I decided to let this breach of discipline pass, and merely asked him for his murder story. He replied that he hadn't written it.

"'Well, get to work on it at once,' I said rather sharply.

"Then he really surprised me by saying that he had nothing to write beyond the bare facts already known. The police had developed nothing new, and he supposed that I had worked up the story from the evening papers.

"'And has it come to pass that you wait for the police to develop a murder case for you?' I exclaimed angrily. 'As for the reports in the evening papers, you can "fake" a better story than they had.'

"He sat down in apparent despair at his desk. Then I relented and cajoled him a little, begging him not to spoil his great record by failing in such a case.

"'There's a starter for you,' said I, throwing him the article I had commenced. 'Now go ahead and fill that out with a column description of the scene.'

"'I haven't even visited it,' he replied. Nevertheless he picked up the pages and read them, as if impelled by some hateful fascination. Then he took up his pen to make a few minor corrections. Then, as if totally oblivious of my presence, he began to write.

"As sheet after sheet fell from under his fingers I snatched them up, read them hurriedly, and shot them up to the composing-room. I read rapidly, taking but small account of the matter so long as it ran smoothly, while I had too much confidence in him to question the accuracy of his statements. I only realised that he was writing a great account—the greatest he had ever written. He seemed inspired with the very innermost thoughts of the murder, and under his touch every trivial incident came out with distinctness and coherence that made the cause and method of the crime perfectly plain.

"First he described the scene with accuracy and detail that would have been impossible for one who had not studied it closely. The selection of the spot was explained by the fact that the bright electric light streaming through the windows of the engine-house made it impossible for the passer-by to see into the shadows. Thus, while impenetrable darkness screened the assassin, the rattle and roar of the machinery near by drowned all sounds of the struggle and of the falling body.

"The blow on the head, he demonstrated, must have been from a stick, while the wound through the heart could only have been made by one of those long, fine-bladed stilettos of Italian make. Furthermore, the fact that this peculiar weapon was driven home with a firm hand after the victim had been stunned by a blow on the head, indicated premeditated and deliberate murder, while the theory of robbery was disproved by the fact that the man's valuables had been untouched. The only reliable theory, therefore, was that the motive of the murderer was revenge.

"A more masterly analysis of a case I never read, but here he branched off into what I at first supposed to be purely imaginary speculations as to the wrong which had led the murderer to seek the life of the unknown man. These seemed purposely vague at first, but gathered in strength and certainty until I concluded that he must have some good foundation for them. Starting with hypothesis, he soon began to state them as facts. He described how the dead man, a once trusted friend, had entered the home of another, how by subtle wiles and deceit he had stolen the love of his wife; then followed an elopement and the breaking up of that once happy home.

"He told with the bitterness of truth how the scoundrel had deserted the erring woman and left her to perish alone; how the idea of revenge had filled the mind of the wronged husband; how, himself unseen, he had followed every movement of the intended victim for months and carefully plotted his destruction; how he had decoyed the doomed man to the town, and to the very spot where the murder was committed, and how he had destroyed the only clues—a couple of letters in the pockets of the dead man—and finally made his own escape, the secret safe in his own heart alone.

"As I read this remarkable tale through the conviction forced itself upon me that this was the absolute truth. If the writer himself had committed the deed, he could not have described it more graphically. Suddenly the thought flashed over me—Could he describe such a crime thus without having in fact committed it?'

"We were alone in the room. I glanced at Jones apprehensively. He was writing rapidly, fiercely. His eyes were fixed, but he seemed to be looking through and beyond the paper across which his pen flew at something fascinating, terrible. When he finished, it was with a start, as if waking from a trance. I glanced at the last page, where was final confirmation of my fears.

"'Good Heavens, Jones, is this true?' I managed to say.

"'Every word of it, as I live,' he replied firmly, if faintly.

"'Then you have written the warrant for your own arrest,' I said.

"His head dropped on his desk, but he said not a word.

"'Jones,' said I, finally shaking him by the shoulder to arouse him to an understanding of my meaning, 'enough to hang you is in type. In an hour the papers will be on the streets. In another hour the police will be after you. Go; make the most of your start.'

"It was as I predicted," said the city editor after a pause. "Before daylight a detective called on me to ascertain the source of that story. I simply pointed to Jones' name on the book, and they went after him."

"Did they catch him?" asked the other eagerly.

"They found him in his room with a stiletto through his heart." S. L. S.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

SUMMARY.

Andrea de Mancini, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his château. Yvonne, however, is not at all gracious to de Luynes, because she knows of the duel which he fought with her brother, as she and her sister Geneviève were the two ladies who befriended him. De Mancini falls in love with Geneviève.

De Luynes does not stay at the Château de Canaples, but at an inn in Blois, the *Lys de France*. One morning he is visited there by the Marquis de St. Auban, who himself wants to marry Yvonne—for her money. After insulting each other a duel is arranged for the following morning. St. Auban tells de Luynes that Cardinal Mazarin has issued a warrant for his arrest.

CHAPTER X.

The Conscience of Malpertuis.

And so back to my room I went, my task accomplished; and so pleased was I with what had passed that, as I drew on my boots, preparing to set out to Canaples, I laughed softly to myself.

St. Auban I would dispose of in the morning; as for the other members of the cabal, I deemed neither Vilmorin nor Malpertuis sufficiently formidable to inspire uneasiness. St. Auban gone, they, too, would vanish. There remained then Eugène de Canaples. Him, however, methought, no great evil was to be feared from. In Paris he might be as loud-voiced as he pleased, but in his father's château, from what I had learnt, 'twas unlikely he would so much as show himself. Moreover, he was wounded, and before he had sufficiently recovered to offer interference, it was more than probable that Andrea would have married one or the other of Mesdemoiselles de Canaples; I had a shrewd suspicion that it would be the wrong one, and there again I feared trouble.

As I stood up, booted and ready to descend, there came a gentle tap at my door, and in answer to my "enter," there stood before me a very dainty and foppish figure. I stared hard at the effeminate face and the long fair locks of my visitor, thinking that I was to become the dupe of my eyes.

"M. de Vilmorin!" I murmured in astonishment, as he came forward, having closed the door. "You here?"

In answer he bowed, and greeted me with cold ceremoniousness.

"I have been in Blois since yesterday, Monsieur."

"In truth I might have guessed it, Vicomte. Your visit flatters me, for of course I take it you are come to pay me your respects," I said ironically. "A glass of wine, Vicomte?"

"A thousand thanks, Monsieur, no," he answered coldly, in his mincing tones. "It is concerning your affair with M. le Marquis de St. Auban that I am come." And drawing forth a dainty kerchief which filled the room with the scent of ambergris, he tapped his lips with it affectedly.

"Do you come as friend or—in some other capacity?"

"I come as mediator."

"Mediator!" I echoed, and my brow grew dark. "Sdeath. Has St. Auban's courage lasted just so long as the sting of my whip?"

He raised his eyebrows after a supercilious fashion that made me burn to strike the chair from under him.

"You misapprehend me; M. de St. Auban has no desire to avert the duel. On the contrary, he will not rest until the affront you have put upon him be washed out——"

"It will be, I'll answer for it."

"Your answer, sir, is characteristic of a braggart. He who promises most does not always fulfil most."

I stared at him in amazement.

"Shall I promise you something, Vicomte? Good gracious, if you seek to pick a quarrel with me——"

"Heaven forbid!" he ejaculated, turning colour. And his suddenly awakened apprehensions swept aside the affectation that hitherto had marked his speech and manner.

"Then, Monsieur, be brief, and state the sum of this mediation."

"It is this, Monsieur. In the heat of the moment, M. le Marquis gave you, in the hearing of half-a-score of people, an assignation for to-morrow morning. News of the affair will spread rapidly through Blois, and it is likely there will be no lack of spectators on the green to witness the encounter. Therefore, as my friend thinks this will be as unpalatable to you as it is to him, he has sent me to suggest a fresh meeting-place."

"Pooh, sir," I answered lightly, "I care not for myself who comes. I am accustomed to a crowd. Still, since M. de St. Auban finds it discomposing, let us arrange otherwise."

"There is yet another point. M. de St. Auban spoke to you, I believe, of an officer who is coming hither, charged with your arrest. It is probable that he may reach Blois before

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morning, so that the Marquis thinks that to make certain you might consent to meet him to-night."

"St. Auban is indeed in earnest, then! Convey to him my expressions of admiration at this suddenly awakened courage. Be good enough, Vicomte, to name the meeting-place."

"Do you know the chapel of St. Sulpice des Reaux?"

"What, beyond the Loire?"

"Precisely, Monsieur. About a league from Chambord, by the river side."

"I can find the place."

"Will you meet us there at nine o'clock to-night?"

I looked askance at him.

"But why cross the river? This side affords many likely spots."

"Very true, Monsieur. But the Marquis has business at Chambord this evening, after which there will be no reason—indeed, it will inconvenience him exceedingly—to return to Blois."

"What!" I cried, more and more astonished. "St. Auban is leaving Blois?"

"This evening, sir."

"But, Vicomte, why make an assignation in such a place, and at night, when at any hour of the day I can meet the Marquis on this side, without suffering the inconvenience of crossing the river?"

"There will be a bright moon, well up by nine o'clock. Moreover, remember that you cannot, as you say, meet St. Auban on this side at any time he may appoint, since to-night or to-morrow the officer who is in search of you will arrive."

I pondered for a moment. Then, "M. le Vicomte," I said, "in this matter of ground 'tis I who have the first voice."

"How so?"

"Because the Marquis is the affronted one."

"Therefore he has a right to choose."

"A right, yes. But that is not enough. The necessity to fight is on his side. His honour is hurt, not mine. I have whipped him; I am content. Now let him come to me."

"Assuredly you will not be so ungenerous."

"I do not care about journeying to Reaux to afford him satisfaction."

"Does Monsieur fear anything?"

"Vicomte, you go too far!" I cried, my pride gaining the mastery. "Since it is asked of me, I will go."

"M. le Marquis will be grateful to you."

"A fig for his gratitude," I answered, whereupon the Vicomte shrugged his narrow shoulders, and his errand done, took his leave of me.

When he was gone I called Michelot to tell him of the journey I must go that night, so that he might hold himself in readiness.

"Why, if Monsieur will pardon me," quoth he, "do you go to meet the Marquis de St. Auban at St. Sulpice des Reaux by night?"

"Precisely what I asked Vilmorin. The Marquis desires it, and—what will you? Since I am going to kill the man, I can scarce do less than kill him on a spot of his own choosing."

Michelot screwed up his face, and scratched at his grey beard with his huge hand.

"Does no suspicion of foul play cross your mind, Monsieur?" he inquired timidly.

"Shame on you, Michelot!" I returned, with some heat. "Do you not yet understand the ways of gentlemen. Think you that M. de St. Auban would stoop to such a deed as that? He would be shamed for ever. Pooh! I would as soon suspect my Lord Cardinal of stealing the chalices from Notre Dame. Go, see to my horse. I am riding to Canaples."

As I rode out towards the Château I fell to thinking, and my thoughts turning to Vilmorin, I marvelled at the part he was playing in this little comedy of a cabal against Andrea de Mancini. His tastes and instincts were of the boudoir, the antechamber, and the table. He wore a sword because it was so ordained by fashion, and because the hilt was convenient for the display of a jewel or two. Certainly 'twas not for utility that it hung beside him, and no man had ever seen it drawn. Nature had made him the most pitiful coward begotten. Why, then, should he involve himself in an affair which promised bloodshed, and which must be attended by many a risk for him? There was in all this some mystery that I could not fathom.

From the course into which they had slipped, my thoughts were diverted, when I was within half-a-mile of the Château, by the sight of a horseman stationed, motionless, among the trees that bordered the road. It occurred to me that men take not such a position without purpose—usually an evil one. I slackened speed somewhat and rode on, watching him sharply. As I came up, he walked his horse forward to meet me, and I beheld a man in the uniform of the *gardes du corps*, in whom presently I recognised the little sparrow Malpertuis, with whom I had exchanged witticisms at Choisy. He was the one man wanting to complete the trinity that had come upon us at the inn of the *Connêtable*.

It flashed across my mind that he might be the officer charged with my arrest, and that he had arrived sooner than had been expected. If so, it was likely to go ill with him, for I was not minded to be taken until St. Auban's soul sped downwards.

He hailed me as I advanced, and, indeed, rode forward to meet me.

"You are come at last, M. de Luynes," was his greeting; "I have waited for you this hour past."

"How knew you I should ride this way?"

"I learnt that you would visit Canaples before noon. Be good enough to quit the road and pass under those trees with me. I have something to say to you, but it were not well that we should be seen together."

"For the sake of your character or mine, M. Malappris?"

"Malpertuis!" he snapped.

"Malpertuis," I corrected. "You were saying that we should not be seen together."

"St. Auban might hear of it."

"Ah! And therefore?"

"You shall learn." We were now under the trees, which, albeit leafless, yet screened us partly from the road. He drew rein, and I followed his example.

"M. de Luynes," he began, "I am or was a member of the cabal formed against Mazarin's aims in the matter of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Canaples to his nephew. I joined hands with St. Auban, lured by his protestations that it is not meet that such an heiress as Yvonne de Canaples should be forced to marry a foreigner of no birth and less distinction whilst France holds so many noble suitors to her hand. This motive, by which I know that even Eugène de Canaples was actuated, was, St. Auban gave me to understand, his only one for embarking upon this business, as it was also Vilmorin's. Now, M. de Luynes, I have to-day discovered that I have been duped by St. Auban and *his* dupe, Vilmorin. St. Auban lied to me; another motive brings him into the affair. He seeks himself, by any means that may present themselves, to marry Yvonne—and her estates, whilst the girl, I am told, loathes him beyond expression. Vilmorin, again, is actuated by no less a purpose. And so, what think you these two knaves—this master knave and his dupe—have determined? To carry off Mademoiselle by force."

"Heaven forbid!" I burst out, and would have added more, but his gesture silenced me, and he continued—

"Vilmorin believes that St. Auban is helping him in this, whereas St. Auban is but fooling him with ambiguous speeches until they have the lady safe. Then might will assert itself, and St. Auban need but show his fangs to drive the sneaking coward away from the prize he fondly dreams is to be his."

"When do these gentlemen propose to carry out their plan? Have they determined that?" I inquired breathlessly.

"Aye, they have. They hope to accomplish it this very day. Mademoiselle de Canaples has received a letter wherein she is asked to meet her anonymous correspondent in the coppice yonder, at the Angelus, this evening, if she would learn news of great importance to her, touching a conspiracy against her father."

"Faugh!" I sneered. "'Tis too poor a bait to lure her with."

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"Say you so? Believe me, that unless she be dissuaded she will comply with the invitation, so cunningly was the letter couched. A closed carriage will be waiting at this very spot. Into this St. Auban, Vilmorin, and their braves will thrust the girl, then away through Blois, and beyond it for a mile or so, in the direction of Meung, thereby misleading any chance pursuers. There they will quit the coach, and take a boat that is to be in waiting for them, and which will bear them back with the stream to Chambord. Thereafter, Heaven pity the poor lady, if they get thus far without mishap!"

"Now I understand!" I cried, slapping my thigh. And to myself I thought of the assignation at St. Sulpice des Reaux; and the reason for this, as also St. Auban's resolution to so suddenly quit Blois, grew of a sudden clear to me. Also did I recall the riddle touching Vilmorin's conduct, which, a few moments ago, I had puzzled over, and of which, methought, that I now held the solution.

"What do you understand?" asked Malpertuis.

"Something that was told me this morning," I made answer; then spoke of gratitude, wherein he cut me short.

"I ask no thanks!" he said curtly. "You owe me none. What I have done is not for love of you or Mancini; for I love neither of you. It is done because I am in honour bound to do it. I told St. Auban that I would have no part in this outrage. But that is not enough; I owe it to my honour to attempt the frustration of so dastardly a plan. You, M. de Luynes, appear to be the most likely person to encompass this, in the interests of your friend, Mancini; I leave the matter therefore in your hands. Good-day."

And with this abrupt leave-taking, the little fellow doffed his hat to me, and wheeling his horse, he set spurs in its flanks, and was gone before a word of mine could have stayed him.

My thoughts were diverted by the sight of a horseman stationed, motionless, among the trees that bordered the road.

CHAPTER XI.

OF A WOMAN'S OBSTINACY.

"M. DE LUYNES is a wizard," quoth Andrea, laughing, in answer to something that had been said.

It was afternoon, we had dined, and the bright sunshine and springlike mildness of the weather had lured us out upon the terrace. Yvonne and Geneviève occupied the stone seat. Andrea had perched himself upon the granite balustrade, and facing them he sat, swinging his shapely legs to and fro, as he chatted merrily, whilst on either side of him stood the Chevalier de Canaples and I.

"If M. de Luynes be as great a wizard in other things as with the sword, then in truth, he is a fearful magician," said Canaples.

I bowed, yet not so low but that I detected a sneer on Yvonne's lips.

"So, pretty lady," said I to myself, "we shall see if presently your lip will curl when I show you something of my wizard's art."

And presently my chance came. M. de Canaples found reason to leave us, and no sooner was he gone than Geneviève remembered that she had that day discovered a budding leaf upon one of the rose-trees in the garden below. Andrea naturally caused an argument by asserting that she was the victim of her fancy, as it was by far too early in the year. By that means, these two found the plea they sought for quitting us, since neither could rest until the other was convinced.

So down they went into that rose-garden, which, methought, was like to prove their fool's paradise, and Yvonne and I were left alone. Then she also arose, but, as she was on the point of quitting me, "Mademoiselle," I ventured, "will you honour me by remaining for a moment? There is something that I would say to you."

With raised eyebrows, she gave me a glance mingled with that superciliousness which she was for ever bestowing upon me, and which, from the monotony of it alone, grew irksome.

"What can you have to say to *me*, M. de Luynes?"

"Will you not be seated? I shall not long detain you, nevertheless——"

"If I stand, perchance you will be more brief. I am waiting, Monsieur."

I shrugged my shoulders rudely. Why, indeed, be courteous where so little courtesy was met with?

"A little while ago, Mademoiselle, when M. de Mancini dubbed me a wizard, you were good enough to sneer. Now a sneer, Mademoiselle, implies unbelief, and I would convince you that you were wrong to disbelieve."

"If you have no other motive for detaining me, suffer me to depart," she interrupted, with some

warmth. "Whether you be a wizard or not, is of no moment to me."

"And yet I dare swear that you will be of a different mind within five minutes. A wizard is one who discloses things unknown to his fellow men. I am about to convince you that I can do this, and by convincing you I am about to serve you."

"I seek neither conviction nor service at your hands," she answered.

"Your courtesy dumfounds me, Mademoiselle."

"No less than your insolence dumfounds me," she retorted, with crimson cheeks. "Do you forget, sir, that I know you for what you are—a gamester, a libertine, a duellist, the murderer of my brother?"

"That your brother lives, Mademoiselle, is, methinks, sufficient proof that I have not murdered him."

"You willed his death if you did not encompass it; so 'tis all one. Do you not understand that it is because my father receives you here, thanks to M. de Mancini, your friend—a friendship easily understood from the advantages you must derive from it—that I consent to endure your presence and the insult of your glance? Is it not enough that I should do this, and have you not wit enough to discern it, without adding to my shame by your insolent call upon my courtesy?"

Her words cut me as no words that I ever heard, and, more than her words, her tone of loathing and disgust unspeakable. For half that speech I should have killed a man—indeed I had killed men for less than half. And yet for all the passion that raged in my soul, I preserved upon my countenance a smiling mask. That smile exhausted her patience and increased her loathing, for, with a contemptuous exclamation she turned away.

"Tarry but a moment, Mademoiselle," I cried, with a sudden note of command. "Or, if you will go, go then, but take with you my assurance that before nightfall you will weep bitterly for it."

My words arrested her. The mystery of them awakened her curiosity.

"You speak in riddles, Monsieur."

"Like a true wizard, Mademoiselle. You received a letter this morning in a handwriting unknown, and bearing no signature."

She wheeled round and faced me again with a little gasp of astonishment.

"How know you that? Ah! I understand. You wrote it."

"What shrewdness, Mademoiselle!" I laughed ironically. "Come, think again. What need have I to bid you meet me in the coppice yonder? May I not speak freely with you here?"

"You know the purport of that letter?"

"I do, Mademoiselle, and I know more. I know that this hinted conspiracy against your father is a trumped-up lie to lure you to the coppice."

"And for what purpose, pray?"

"An evil one—your abduction. Shall I tell you who penned that note, and who awaits you? The Marquis César de St. Auban!"

She shuddered as I pronounced the name, then, looking me straight between the eyes, "How came you to know these things?" she inquired.

"What does it signify since I know them?"

"This, Monsieur—that unless I learn how, I can attach no credit to your preposterous story."

"Not credit it?" I cried. "Let me assure you that I have spoken the truth. Let me swear it. Go to the coppice at the appointed time, and things will fall out as I have predicted."

"Again, Monsieur, how do you know this?" she persisted, as women will.

"I may not tell you."

We stood close together, and her clear grey eyes met mine, her lip curling in disdain.

"You may not tell me? You need not. I can guess it." And she tossed her shapely head and laughed. "Seek some likelier story, Monsieur. Had you not spoken of it, 'tis likely I should have left the letter unheeded. But your disinterested warning has determined me to go to the *rendezvous*. Shall I tell you what I have guessed? That this conspiracy against my father, the details of which you would not have me learn, is some evil of your own devising. Ah! You change colour," she cried, pointing to my face. Then, with a laugh of disdain, she left me before I had sufficiently recovered from my amazement to bid her stay.

"Heavens!" I cried, as I watched the tall, lissom figure vanish through the portals of the Château. "Did ever God create so crass and obstinate a thing as woman?"

It occurred to me to tell Andrea, and bid him warn her. But then she would guess that I had prompted him. Naught remained but to lay the matter before the Chevalier de Canaples. Already I had informed him of my unpleasantness with St. Auban, and of the duel that was to be fought that night and he, in his turn, had given me the details of his stormy interview with the Marquis, which had culminated in St. Auban's dismissal from Canaples. I had not hitherto deemed it necessary to alarm him with the news imparted me by Malpertuis, imagining that did I inform Mademoiselle, that would suffice.

Now, however, as I have said, no other course was left me but to tell him of it. Accordingly, I went within, and inquired of Guilbert, whom I met in the hall, where I might find the Chevalier. He answered me that M. de Canaples was not in the Château. It was believed that he had gone with M. Louis, the intendant of the estates, to visit the vineyards at Monteroix.

The news made my gorge rise with impatience. Already it was close upon five o'clock, and in another hour the sun would set and the Angelus would toll the knell of Mademoiselle's preposterous suspicions, unless in the meantime I had speech with Canaples, and led him to employ a father's authority to keep his daughter indoors.

Fuming at the delay, I called for my horse, and set out at a brisk trot for Monteroix. But my ride was fruitless; the vineyard peasants had not seen the Chevalier for over a week.

Now 'twixt Monteroix and the Château there lies a good league, and to make matters worse, as I galloped furiously back to Canaples, an evil chance led me to mistake the way, and pursue a track that brought me out to the very banks of the river, with a strong belt of trees screening the Château from sight, and defying me to repair my error by going straight ahead.

I was forced to retrace my steps, and before I had regained the point where I had gone astray, a precious quarter of an hour was wasted, and the sun already hung, a dull red globe, on the brink of the horizon.

Clenching my teeth, I tore at my horse's flanks, and with a bloody heel I drove the maddened brute along at a pace that might have cost us both dearly. I dashed, at last, into the quadrangle, and throwing the reins to a gaping groom, I sprang up the steps.

"Is the Chevalier returned?" I gasped breathlessly.

"Not yet, Monsieur," answered Guilbert, with a tranquillty that made me desire to strangle him.

"Is Mademoiselle in the Château?" was my next question, mechanically asked.

"I saw her on the terrace some moments ago. She has not since come within."

Like one possessed I flew across the intervening room and out on to the terrace. Geneviève and Andrea were walking there, deep in conversation. At another time I might have reviled their lack of prudence. At the moment I did not so much as remark it.

"Where is Mademoiselle de Canaples?" I burst out.

They gazed at me as much astounded by my question and the abruptness of it as by my apparent agitation.

"Has anything happened?" inquired Geneviève, her blue eyes wide open.

"Yes—no; naught has happened. Tell me where she is. I must speak to her."

"She was here a while ago," said Andrea, "but she left us, to stroll along the river bank."

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"How long is it since she left you?"

"A quarter of an hour perhaps!"

"Something *has* happened!" cried Geneviève, and added more maybe, but waited not to hear.

Muttering curses as I ran—for 'tis my way to curse where pious souls might pray—I sped back to the quadrangle and my horse.

"Follow me!" I shouted to the groom, "you and as many of your fellows as you can find. Follow me at once—at once, mark you—to the coppice by the river." And without waiting for his answer, I sent my horse thundering down the avenue. The sun was gone, leaving naught but a roseate streak to tell of its passage, and at that moment a distant bell tinkled forth the Angelus.

With whip, spur and imprecations I plied my steed, a prey to such excitement as I had never known until that moment—not even in the carnage of battle.

I had no plan. My mind was a chaos of thought, without a single clear idea to light it, and I never so much as bethought me that single-handed I was about to attempt to wrest Yvonne from the hands of perchance half-a-dozen men. To save time I did not far pursue the road, but, clearing a hedge, I galloped as hard as I could across the meadow towards the coppice by the water side. As I rode I saw no sign of any moving thing. No sound disturbed the evening's stillness save the dull thump of my horse's hoofs upon the turf, and a great fear arose in my heart that I might come too late.

At last I reached the belt of trees, and my fears grew into certainty. The place was deserted.

She wheeled round and faced me with a little gasp of astonishment.

Then a fresh hope sprang up. Perchance, thinking of my warning, she had seen the emptiness of her suspicions towards me, and had pursued that walk of hers in another direction.

But when I had penetrated to the little open space within that cluster of naked trees, I had proof overwhelming that the worst had befallen. Not only on the moist ground was stamped the impress of struggling feet, but on a branch I found a strip of torn green velvet, and remembering the dress she had worn that day, I understood to the full the significance of that rag, and understanding it, I groaned aloud.

(To be continued.)

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 13th. Postcards only, please.

Nothing to Grasp.

"I CAN'T give you a job," said Mr. Dimity to an applicant for employment. "I'd like to employ you, but you grasp the situation, don't you?" "Well, sir," was the reply, "under the circumstances I hardly see how I can."

Charging for Time.

CHEMIST'S ASSISTANT: "Good gracious! I have kept that woman waiting three-quarters of an hour. I forgot all about her prescription." Chemist: "You will have to charge her a good tall price in order to make her think you had a lot of trouble in mixing it up."

He had Sold the Apricots.

"DON'T you eat tart?" he asked the young man who sat next to him in the restaurant. "Oh yes," "But you don't take any." "He said apricot tart." "But what's the matter with apricot tart?" "Why, I'm the grocery clerk who sold him the tinned apricots, and gave him twenty per cent. off because we had had the tins in stock three years."

His Dearest Treasure.

"YOUNG man," said the fond father, "in giving you my daughter I have intrusted you with the dearest treasure of my life." The young man was duly impressed. Then he looked at his watch. "Really," he remarked, "I had no idea it was so late. The trams have stopped. Could I borrow your bicycle to get back home?" "Young man, I would not trust anybody on earth with that bicycle."

Ample Proof.

"YOU'RE pretty small," said the man who was engaging some men to go on an exploring expedition with him. "I shouldn't think you had enough endurance to stand——" "Endurance!" exclaimed the little man. "Why, sir, I've got a record for that." "How so?" "I put in a whole afternoon at a football match in the rain with a girl six feet tall, and held the umbrella over her head. If that doesn't show endurance I should like to know——" "That's enough. You'll do."

A Pity to Part Them.

AN elderly lady went to an English country market one day to buy a Christmas goose. At a stall where she called, two live geese were exposed for sale, both in custody of a cherry-cheeked country lass. The little maid would not sell one goose without the other. Remembering that a friend had expressed a wish for a Christmas bird, the customer was easily prevailed on to take both. But as she was concluding the bargain it occurred to her to ask the maid why she had refused to sell the geese separately "If you please, ma'am," was the naïve answer. "mother said as how the geese had lived together for twenty years, and it would be cruel to part them.'

She Hadn't Told.

"JENNIE," said little Mabel to her big sister at breakfast, "did you tell papa?" "Tell papa what?" asked Jennie. "Why you told Mr. Bustler last night if he did it again you'd tell papa—and he did it again. I saw him!" And then papa looked at Jennie over his glasses.

Lowering the Record.

MOTHER (to her elderly unmarried daughter): "Why Julia, what do you mean by using the Family Bible in that way? You are scratching out figures in the family record, and inserting others." Julia: "It is a record of my birth, isn't it?" "Yes, it is." "Well, I'm lowering the record."

One was Enough.

"HOLD on!" said the doorkeeper at the theatre, as the swain pushed past him, "you can't both go in on that; this ticket is for only one seat." "That's all right, mister, one cheer's been big enough to hold both of us many a time, ain't it, Liza?" And in a cloud of Liza's best blushes they were gone through.

A Test of True Gentility.

"WHAT'S the new lodger like, Mary Ann?" "He's no gentleman, whatever he's like!" "No gentleman! What's he been and done?" "Why, he see me a-carryin' up the coals, an' 'e says: 'I'm afraid that scuttle's too heavy for you,' 'e says; 'pray let me carry it!' 'e says. An' 'e ups and carries it 'isself, just like a footman!"

Rather Suspicious.

MABEL: "Such a joke on Mr. Gayboy. We were out on the balcony between the dances, and he got the sleeve of his dress coat all over red paint from one of the posts that were just painted." Maud: "And did you go near the post?" Mabel: "No. Why?" Maud: "Because you have red paint all over the side of your dress."

Keeping Up Appearances.

IT was one of Smith's little weaknesses to appear to be in a better position than was really the case. One day he took his eldest son for a walk, and permitted him to play with some other boys while he read the paper. On the way home Smith inquired: "What were you talking about to those boys?" "Oh!" replied the boy, "I was telling them that you were our footman. I did it to keep up appearances, you know."

He Had Come for the Rest of It.

DOORKEEPER OF THEATRE: "You cannot come in on this ticket. It is dated 1896." McWhahagan: "Oi'd like to know whei Oi can't come in with it. The thayaytre sould it to me to come in." "They couldn't possibly sell you a ticket dated 1896. That's five years old." "Av coorse it is. Look here; this here programme sez: 'Foive years elapse between acts wan an two,' so Oi've come to see the second act; but Oi'll be hanged if Oi remember what the first was about."

ONE correct claim has been received in connection with the Photo Competition this week, and a £5 note has therefore been sent to

Mrs. Weigall,
Corromander,
Southfield Road,
Paignton, Devon.

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A SWISS LOVE STORY.

In a pretty chalet that nestled high upon the shaggy breast of Mount Obgadin lived the widow Neur and her daughter Marie.

When fierce storms came rushing down the mountain side, she knew the trees would bend their tall heads together and twine their strong arms around her home, until, robbed of his victim, the baffled storm rushed on.

When morning broke the same friends stood erect and stately, drawing aside their leaves and branches, that the sunbeams might not linger in their soft embraces, but hasten down to awaken their favourite, Marie.

Very lovely was the little Swiss maid, with violet eyes that now danced and sparkled and then grew soft and tender as a little child's. Two rose-red lips shut in her pearly teeth, and when she smiled a dimple danced for a moment on her peachy cheek. Her hair hung in caressing curls around her low white forehead, and fell in ripples of sunshine far below her slender waist. And her voice! Ah! that was Marie's greatest charm. Soft and clear, not a discordant note marred its sweet, pure harmony. Sometimes as she sang at her evening devotions the herdsmen far below in the valley, catching faint notes of her song, looked up and crossed themselves, half-believing they heard an echo of an angel choir.

But very few knew of Marie's beauty. For when she went with her mother on one of her rare visits to the hamlet below, she brushed her wavy hair straight and smooth from her forehead, and braided it in long stiff plaits which fell down her back.

Her eyelids, with their curtains of long, silky lashes, drooped over her dancing eyes until one looked in vain for a glimpse of their beauty. Her red lips shut firmly over her pearly teeth, while the dimple hid itself resolutely away from sight. And her sweet voice, frightened at its own sound so far from home, grew faint and husky, until, in this shrinking, sober damsel, walking so timidly beside the widow Neur, you would have found it hard to recognise the beautiful Marie of the mountain.

So it happened that only her mother and one other person knew how good and sweet and fair Marie was.

The other was a stranger who came from a far-away country, and spent his summers in a little house on the mountain's very top.

The simple villagers called him "the wizard," and told strange tales of how he spent whole nights gazing at the heavens through a long tube; that he could foretell to an hour when the sun would cover itself with darkness; but strangest of all, he had a little wire stretched for miles over hills and valleys to the great city! This wire talked to him in a queer language which no one could understand.

"Tick, tick, tickety, tick," it said, and it told him things that happened miles and miles away.

Marie did not know how wise the wizard was when he came to her home one morning and asked for a drink of water.

He followed her to the spring when she went for it, and stopped by the way to break open a curious stone. He showed Marie how queerly marked it was inside, and then told her a story about it. The usually timid maiden was so interested she forgot to be frightened, and thus a strong friendship between the two was begun.

After this, the wizard often came to the widow Neur's chalet for rest and refreshment on his long rambles, and Marie unconsciously revealed her charms to him, one by one, until long before the first summer was ended the stranger knew that no girl in all the canton could be compared with Marie.

On the other side of the mountain from the widow Neur's lived another widow. She, too, had but one child, a son, who was the pride and delight of her life. This was the brave young hunter and guide, Gustavus Friel.

Everyone knew and liked Gustavus. He was straight, tall and handsome with flashing brown eyes, and a laugh as frank as a child's. He was the favourite of the canton, and there was not a girl within its bounds who would not have been proud to plight her troth with him.

Gustavus, however, cared little for the Obgadin maidens. He would far rather chase the chamois up the mountain-side or guide travellers through its dangerous passes than spend his time with the finest of the maids of the hamlet.

His mother often said: "My son, when wilt thou bring me home a daughter and thyself a wife?"

And Gustavus, smiling and pressing a kiss on her forehead, would answer:

"When I find a maid as good as thee, mother; but I want no idle, shrill-voiced wife to disturb our quiet home."

But one day his mother said more sadly and seriously than ever before:

"Gustavus, I am growing old and feeble. I can no longer make and mend thy clothes and keep our home. Thou must have a wife. Promise me at the fête next week thou wilt choose one from among the maidens there."

Gustavus reluctantly gave the desired promise, but it weighed heavily upon him. He could think of nothing else, and the more he pondered the heavier his heart grew.

At last he seized his gun and went out on the mountain, but the perplexing question followed him, until in despair he threw himself on the ground groaning: "Oh, that some wise man would make this choice for me!"

A moment after he looked up and saw, as if in answer to his wish, the wizard approaching him.

"Why," he exclaimed to himself, "did I not think of him before? Surely he, if anyone, can help me." Then, with a throbbing heart, Gustavus sprang up to meet him.

The wizard greeted Gustavus warmly, for he felt a strong friendship for the young guide who had taken him safely through many a dangerous mountain excursion.

And now his sympathetic question: "Why, what's troubling you, my boy?" opened the way for Gustavus to pour out all his perplexity, ending the recital with the question:

"Canst thou not help me choose a good wife who would make my life happy? For now I have given my mother my promise to find a wife at the fête next week."

The wizard smiled sympathetically, and then thought in silence a little while before he answered:

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"If a pure true heart is united to a true, pure heart both lives must be happy."

"Alas!" answered Gustavus, "but I know not which maiden among them all has the purest, truest heart."

"There will be one such heart at the fête," answered the wizard, "but you may fail to recognise it. However, if you will come to me to-morrow I will give you a charm that will show you this heart."

Here was comfort, indeed, and with a light heart Gustavus thanked his friend and bounded forward.

Left alone, the wizard continued down the mountain-side, until he came in sight of the widow Neur's chalêt, where he found Marie sitting by the spring. Instead of her usual sunshiny smile, tiny tear-drops stood in her eyes, and there was a grieved look about her rosy lips that made him wish to comfort her.

"What is the matter, little one?" he asked gently.

"Oh, sir," she said, "I want to see the great fête next week, but I have no pretty ornaments to wear, and then——" The long curtains drooped over her shining eyes and the sweet voice sank almost to a whisper. "The good mother says none of the young men will care to dance with me."

"But why?" asked the wizard, in surprise.

"Because I cannot talk and laugh with them as other maidens do. My heart beats fast if they do but glance toward me, and I know not what to say, and so"—here a tear slipped from under the long lashes—"my mother says I had better not go."

"Courage, little one," the wizard answered. "Tell your mother," he added, "that I am going to lend you a silver belt to wear, and that my knowledge tells me that the bravest, handsomest youth in all the land will dance with you quite joyfully."

The happy Marie thanked the wizard as Gustavus had done, and ran off to tell the wonderful news to her mother.

Early next morning Gustavus went for his charm. He found the wizard waiting for him, and, taking him into his strange room, the wise man said, smiling, as he had the day before, half-quizzically, half-sympathetically:

"Here's the charm, my good fellow. You see it is a magic ring. Put it on before you go to the fête, and be sure you dance with every maiden there. When you place your arm about the waist of the one whose heart is true and good a strange feeling will run through you and your hand will cling to her. But be sure that you dance with all!"

Gustavus, greatly wondering, thanked the wizard, and slipped on the ring.

It was a curious circlet of iron, with a flat extension, which the wizard bade him wear pointing toward his palm.

When the fête day came Gustavus was there among the other young men, eager to try his charm.

All the maidens of Obgadin canton were there also, and on the outskirts of one of the gay crowds little Marie hovered timidly beside her mother.

"Why didst thou come, Marie?" asked one of the girls.

"Didst thou think any youth would want to dance with a mouse to-day?" asked another.

Then, seeing the quick tears trembling on Marie's lashes, she added more kindly:

"Ah, well, thou canst at least see our good times."

"What a lovely belt thou hast, Marie!" cried another maiden. "Where didst thou get it?"

"The wizard gave it her," the widow Neur answered shortly, for she did not relish the girl's tone, and she drew her daughter away.

"Come, Marie, let us sit here under the trees and watch the dance."

Marie nestled close to her mother's side, and, as the hours fled and no youth asked her to dance, her head dropped lower and lower, and she wondered if the wise man had made a mistake.

In the meantime Gustavus danced with one after another of the maids, but though he watched with intense eagerness, not once did he feel the strange thrill for which he waited.

"I have danced with them all," he said at last to himself, "except that shy one over there; surely she is not the girl! But as I promised to dance with all, I will try her, too."

He asked her name of one of the girls, and then going to her, said simply:

"Marie, wilt thou dance with me?"

Astonishment and delight made Marie for a moment forget her shyness. The wizard's words were come true!

Rising quickly, she said, smiling upon him:

"Art thou come?"

"She is not so plain, after all," thought Gustavus, as he answered:

"Wast thou looking for me, Marie?"

Marie hung her head without answering, and Gustavus wondering a little at her words, led her to the dance.

As he placed his arm around her his hand touched her shining belt.

Instantly a strange thrill ran through them both, and Gustavus' arm seemed to cling to Marie's waist.

"Marie, didst thou feel that?" he cried earnestly.

And Marie smilingly answered:

"Yes."

So they began dancing, and as they danced it seemed to those watching them that a wonderful transformation came over Marie.

Her hair, shaken loose from its long, stiff braids, hung like a glittering golden veil all around her, her beautiful eyes shone like stars, and the dimpled cheeks and pearly teeth formed a fit hiding-place for the laughing voice that now and then rang sweet and clear from her rosy lips. Not one of the village maidens was half so fair as she!

"Surely," said the amazed villagers, "there never was such a handsome couple."

"But is not Marie under a charm," cried others, "she has suddenly grown so lovely?"

But the widow Neur smiled to herself and said:

"Love's witchery, if it is true and pure, will transform all of us and bring out all that is loveliest and best within us."

As for Gustavus, he thought rightly that he had never seen so good and beautiful a creature, and he blessed the wizard for the charm which had led his heart to her.

Long before the summer ended, Gustavus took home Marie to be his own and his mother's greatest joy and happiness.

When M. le Wizard returned to Paris that winter, he read a scientific paper before the *savants* of the Academy.

In it he detailed many of his wonderful discoveries and his work during the summer. But he did not speak of the most interesting of all—how, by the aid of a little magnet concealed in a steel belt, and a rude ring, he had brought together two loving hearts, and by so doing had caught some of the happiness of paradise and imprisoned it in a chalêt on old Obgadin Mountain.

P. G. M.

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NAME-HUNTING COMPETITION: RAILWAY STATIONS.

1st Prize: £25.

2nd Prize: A Magnificent Parlour Billiard Table.*

3rd Prize: A Columbia Graphophone with 12 Records.

One Sovereign will be given to every Competitor, no matter how many errors may be made, who is one of those whose attempts form the greatest number sent in from any one place mentioned in the correct solutions to this Competition.

For example, if more competitors send in from *Newhaven* than from any other place, each of these competitors will receive £1, no matter how wrong they may be.

Each separate competitor will count as one—not each set of coupons. Therefore, induce your friends to enter for the competition. If you get a few friends to do so, and they in turn each induce a few friends, the number will soon mount up, and *each* will get a golden sovereign, no matter how many.

Don't wait until you are half-way through the competition before you ask your friends. Tell them about it *at once*.

** The Billiard Table is made by J. R. Mally and Co., 15 Goswell Road, E.C., and will go into a furnished room 13ft. square. It has a slate bed, and will stand on any dining-table. The cues, balls, marking-board and spirit level are included.*

Below will be found thirty-six sets of words, each set describing the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom, the name of which will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list cut it out and get the next number of *Pearson's Weekly*, in which another coupon appears.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the reader from whom we receive the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

<——Cut across here——>

Example:—
Fresh Harbour ..... Newhaven...

1. Body of ship	13. Hero of Waterloo	25. Pious chief .....
2. Celebrated horse race	14. Continue painting	26. Guides by the hands .....
3. Clamouring	15. New sovereign	27. Look, royal bird .....
4. Strip off rind	16. Caution cured pork	28. Military engagement .....
5. Tying ham in knots	17. Distribute cards	29. Lobe of ear .....
6. One-wheel vehicle	18. Queen's residence	30. Continue performing .....
7. Vessel in which you bathe	19. Thrusts down	31. Bird of the heron family .....
8. Big gun; thoroughfare	20. One who pins	32. Spoil gate .....
9. Sage of Chelsea	21. Metal in natural state	33. Ship's company .....
10. Completed D	22. Stuffed footstools	34. A football game .....
11. Small, headless nail; stream	23. Perform on lawn	35. An insect; lings .....
12. Tumbler, avaunt!	24. Food untouched	36. Potentate is angry .....

Name..... **Address**.....

.....

Get *Pearson's Weekly* dated January 16th, on sale next Friday.—Another coupon appears in it.

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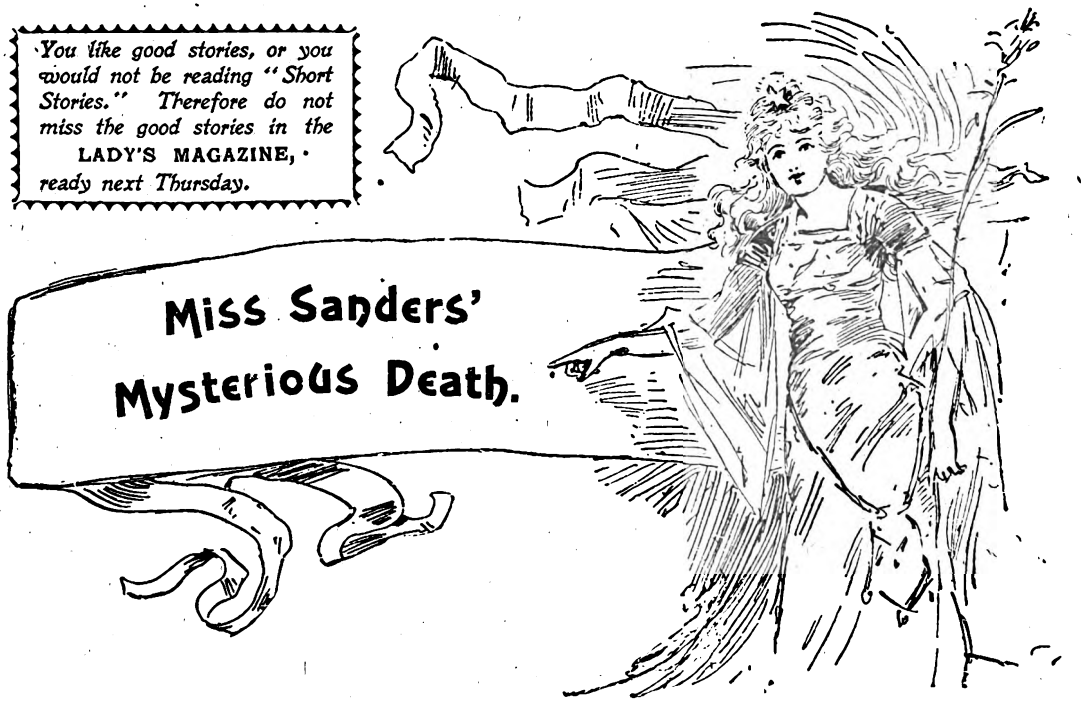
You like good stories, or you would not be reading "Short Stories." Therefore do not miss the good stories in the LADY'S MAGAZINE, *ready next Thursday.*



Miss Sanders' Mysterious Death.

NORBURY HALL is the name of a fashionable boarding school for girls, situated about a mile and three quarters from a pretty little Devon village. There were about three score of girls at the Hall, and not a man about the building. Though it is true there were three men teachers who lived perhaps a quarter of a mile away, and there were four gardeners who lived in their cottages about the same distance in the opposite direction.

It was almost ten o'clock, and profound silence had reigned throughout the Hall for some time. Lights had been extinguished at nine-thirty as was the rule. At nine the evening's studies ceased, and the next half-hour was allowed for the girls to retire. At ten they were supposed to be peacefully wrapped in their beauty sleep.

Suddenly a fearful shriek rent the air.

Now a mouse might have caused a girl to shriek mildly, or if some over studious girl, having kept her candle alight while poring over her lessons, had suddenly had a cold key dropped down her neck by a room mate with a tendency for practical jokes, she might also have given a scream of fright. But it would not have been in either case like the wild shriek that did come from somewhere in the building, and every mother's daughter there knew it.

Girls believe there is safety in numbers in such cases, and it is surprising how quickly they emerged from their rooms, in all stages of undress, and met in the great hallway, where they passed whispered words of inquiry as they huddled together.

The appearance of the headmistress and two of her assistants put a quietus on the girls.

"What is it?" she asked, trying to be more stern than usual, to keep up her courage.

No one could give a satisfactory reply for no one knew. Some conjectured that the cry came from the upper floor, others ventured that it came from the lower, where were the chapel and recitation rooms, now dark and deserted; others insisted that it sounded without, in the grounds.

The headmistress, Miss Crapple, maintained her reputation for firmness of character and quick decision; she satisfied herself that the cry had not come from the upper storey where her apartments, and those of the other teachers and some of the girls were situated, and she headed the procession of a dozen or more candles downstairs to the corridor below, where the other girls had now assembled.

Miss Crapple ran her sharp eye over the feminine army which surrounded her.

"Where is Miss Deering?" she asked loudly. The girls looked at each other in consternation, and drew back from a certain door, which it was then noticed remained closed, though all the others had been left ajar as the girls came out,

"Where's Bessie Sanders? She isn't here either!" chorussed several girls with bated breath.

Bessie Sanders and Alice Deering were close friends and room-mates. The girls of Norbury Hall lived well. Some of their apartments were superbly furnished. They were all of good families, and were not watched as in some schools. Good conduct was a point of honour in which it was believed they never failed.

Miss Crapple stepped up to the door of this room with a firm tread, though her heart was beating fit to burst.

She knocked.

No response was made.

She tried the door handle. The door was locked!

She stooped to the key-hole, the room within was lighted. She asked one of her assistants to fetch her

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bunch of master-keys. A score of girls moved off with her as a body guard. When they returned, Miss Crapple inserted one, and after some difficulty, succeeded in forcing out the other key, and opening the door.

Miss Crapple entered.

The girls crowded about the door, but none would venture in, until those at the rear, not more bold, but pushing and craning to try and see, forced a dozen into the room.

Thus in the room they followed Miss Crapple, and they made the discovery at the same time as the head-mistress, and with wild screams of terror fled back to the hall.

In the centre of the room was a table, upon which was a lighted lamp and several books. Lying upon the floor on the opposite side was the body of a girl. It was Bessie Sanders.

Miss Crapple turned white, and a shiver ran through her frame, but she kept her courage. The girl was dead. There could be no doubt about that. The white face and the rigid features told that. The handle of a knife protruding from the girl's bosom showed how the deed had been done.

The headmistress leant over the girl, and called to some of those standing at the door to come to her assistance. Several ventured in.

"Help me to lift this—Miss Sanders on to the sofa," said Miss Crapple.

One of the girls who had assisted in lifting Miss Sanders' body on to the sofa, suddenly cried in a hysterical voice—

"Look!"

She pointed to the dead girl's bosom. "The knife—that did it—is Miss Deering's! And Miss Deering is not here!"

Then she fainted. Another chill of horror convulsed all the girls, and while this one was being brought to, another became hysterical, and several others burst into tears, making the scene one of pathos and confusion.

When the girl had been brought out of her faint, Miss Crapple said, "We must have assistance. Ring the chapel bell, it will arouse the men."

A dozen girls went out to do this bidding. The chapel bell could be rung by pulling a rope which hung in the lower main hallway. Soon the clash and clangour of the bell sounded out in the still night as it had never done before, all who heard those sounds would know that there was something wrong at the Hall.

While this was being done, Miss Crapple, and some of the more courageous girls were making a search of the rooms. Two of the girls, holding fast to each other's hands, paused before one of the windows, and drew the curtains back. The window was open!

Outside the window, was a small stone balcony, over which a growth of ivy trailed. The girls peered out. The light from within the room shone upon the dress of a girl, lying still upon the balcony.

"Miss Crapple, here is Miss Deering!" one of the girls cried, which brought all who were present to the window. One of the girls fetched the student's lamp from the table, and its rays streamed out in the darkness, and disclosed the fact that Miss Deering lay huddled upon the balcony in an insensible condition. Perhaps she was dead too.

Miss Crapple, with wonderful strength, got out of the window and lifted the girl, then, with the aid of those within, she was carried in and laid upon the bed.

It was then seen that she lived, though she carried a terrible wound on her head. If she could be brought to, perhaps she would be able to disclose the secret of the terrible doings of the night, thought Miss Crapple.

One of the girls exclaimed excitedly:

"Oh, dear, if we only could get a doctor. I'm sure she'll never live till morning."

* * * * *

Though it seemed hours to the girls of the school before help arrived, it was in fact less than half-an-hour from the time the bell first clanged, when the venerable headmaster of the school, Mr. Converse, with his two assistant professors, were in the main hall asking the cause of alarm.

At such times a man is a very useful article, and the presence of these at once restored quiet and confidence in all present. The men were led first to the room of death, and then the headmaster, with Miss Crapple, went into the room where Miss Deering lay. At this moment three of the gardeners arrived, and two were sent for a doctor at once.

Mr. Converse did what he could for the injured girl, and then began to discuss with the head mistress the awful tragedy, and its possible cause. But it was all conjecture, and not the slightest clue could be found from anything that had ever been said by, or had happened to, either the dead girl or her insensible room mate.

"Scotland Yard must be apprised of this," said Mr. Converse, "but before they come in to muddle up this, I am going to call in my young friend Adrian Skillet, who has startled London and the world with his wonderful ability as a detective."

Accordingly, when the two gardeners returned with the doctor, they were again sent off. This time to the nearest railway station, with instructions to have a message sent to Mr. Skillet over the company's private wire.

The mists had hardly risen from the fields the next morning, when a young man strode up to Norbury Hall, and used both bell and knocker at the main entrance.

It was Mr. Skillet; he had caught the midnight train out of London, and had walked the distance from the station to the school. In a case of this kind time was valuable, and it would be losing time to look about for some means of conveyance.

The headmaster seemed to know who his early visitor was, and he did not keep him waiting many minutes.

"Ah, you are early," he said, greeting the great detective cordially, "I am glad to see you again, though I could wish the need of your presence were less tragic. It is a terrible affair, terrible."

Mr. Skillet led the way upstairs, and straight to the door of the room where the tragedy occurred.

"But how did you know this?" exclaimed Mr. Converse. "Have you seen any of the gardeners?"

"I have met no one," replied Mr. Skillet. "I decided where it had taken place as I crossed the garden. I hope the room has not been disturbed?" he added, as they entered.

"I think not, though of course many of the young ladies were here last night, and they were in a great state of excitement."

"You know each and every one who has been in the room?" the detective asked, without manifesting any undue interest in this particular point.

"Miss Crapple will be able to inform you exactly."

The detective nodded.

Briefly Mr. Converse acquainted the detective with all that had happened.

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"Will you be so good as to leave me alone for a time?" asked Mr. Skillet.

"Certainly! You will not disturb this room," pointing to a door that led out of the room in which the tragedy had occurred. "Miss Deering and her attendant are there."

The detective reassured Mr. Converse on this point, and was left alone. For almost an hour he remained therein, and no one knew what he did. The ringing of the first bell caused him to refer to his watch, and he saw it was seven-thirty.

He went out and found Mr. Converse in the office on the floor below.

"The young ladies will be coming down to breakfast presently, I daresay," he said, "Could you bring before me here all who were in the room last night before they sit down to breakfast?"

Mr. Converse promised that it should be done, and went out himself to look up Miss Crapple, and ten minutes later a troop of fifteen young ladies, all looking very sad and frightened and pale, were ushered in before the detective.

Mr. Skillet called each one aside, and held an animated conversation, in which he put quick questions very much to the purpose, and now and then frightened some more than others, as he jotted down in a note-book some of the answers they gave.

When this trying work was over he asked to see Miss Deering, and while the girls trooped into the breakfast-room, he was led upstairs again to the bedside of the girl who perhaps knew more of what had happened than any other living person.

The girl was fortunately awake, and the attendant was trying to persuade her to take some nourishment.

She turned her face to the wall when the two men with Miss Crapple entered the room.

Adrian Skillet moved to the bedside of the girl. Leaning over her he said gently, "Miss Deering, will you tell me all you know of this affair?"

The girl muttered some words, but they were inaudible.

"Do not attempt to deceive me," said the detective, "I know all that has taken place. I know that you understand me, and would reply if you could. I know the motive that prompts you to attempt this deception, you desire to shield the murderer of your friend."

The girl buried her face in the pillow, as though she wished to shut out the words.

"Although everything points to you as being guilty, I know that you are innocent," said Adrian. "You were not in the room when the deed was done, though you came in immediately afterwards.

"You left the room secretly, that is, in a way that nobody but Miss Sanders knew of. There is a rope ladder by which you have been in the habit of passing from your room into the garden. I have this now in my possession. It is evident that you went out into the garden for the purpose of allowing some one to enter the room.

"At any rate that is my belief. A man was in the room, and of this I have absolute proof. I know that he is very tall, by certain marks which his moist hands have left upon the wall.

"I know also that he is light complexioned, and I think I shall be able to recognise him when I meet him, which will be before very long. I am going over to Coreham to-day."

Adrian had named this town only at a venture. It was the nearest town of a goodly size. It was about three miles from the school. But he knew at once that his random shot had gone home, and that the man he wanted was to be found there, for Miss Deering gave a stifled little scream at the mention of the name, and buried her face deeper in the pillow.

"I do not think I will say more," he said, turning to Miss Crapple, and Mr. Converse, who stood near. "It may be serious if I alarm her too much while in this delicate condition."

Converse looked in amazed wonder at his friend the detective. "How did you know all this so soon?"

"By a single hair," replied the detective.

"A hair!"

"Yes. It is a very slender clue, to be sure, but it is the only clue I could find, for the imprint of the fingers upon the wall is by no means conclusive evidence that a man was in the room.

"This hair was the reward of my patient search. It is from a man's head. Look!"

He took a single hair very carefully out of a little book and a powerful magnifying-glass out of another pocket.

"You see how the end is cut? It is a mark that is made by scissors. Its length, too, would indicate that the man wore his hair of medium length. Of all the shades of hair to be found in this school there is not one to match this in colour. If you will look through the glass you will see it has a peculiar kink in it. When I have found the man with hair like that, I have got the one who was in this room last night.

"This young lady would shield him, it seems. Perhaps because she loves him, though I don't know about that yet, because it is evident the man called to visit her friend and not to see her.

"But with this clue I will bring the murderer to the gallows!"

The detective raised his voice so that it could be distinctly heard by the girl in the bed. They were like an electric shock, for she sat up in bed and called out wildly. "You are wrong. No man struck that blow!"

The three turned to Miss Deering.

"Let me tell you now. Listen: It is true a man visited Bessie in that room last night. He has done so often—"

"What!" cried Miss Crapple, in amazed horror, "you dared to permit such infamy!"

"There was no wrong. I know the man, and his honour is above reproach. Even without my confidence in Bessie, I should have no fear.

"Her father denied him the right to call upon her at home because he was poor.

"They loved each other, and I consented to help them in their clandestine meetings. He used to come in by the ladder, often. I was never present, I could not bear it—for—for—I loved him.

"Sometimes I would remain in this room, and sometimes I would go into the garden before he came, and remained there if the night was fine until he went away.

"That was what I did last night, from eight till some time after nine.

"Then I returned, and while concealing the ladder, Bessie screamed. Her cry froze the blood in my veins, but when I got my senses, I parted the curtains and looked into the room.

"Bessie lay still upon the floor. I thought at first she must have fainted, but as I looked I saw something else, the door of the room was softly closing. Then I saw the dagger in Bessie's breast, and I knew she had been murdered, and I knew too, that it must have been done by a jealous woman—one who had loved the man, and having surprised the secret meetings, had killed her rival."

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The girl fell back exhausted.

The professor's eyes searched the detective's face, but no mortal can read the secrets of that mind.

"Let us leave her for the present," said the detective. "I should like to see the young lady who fainted last night, and so quickly recovered."

Miss Crapple sent for the young lady.

"Miss Deering has furnished a valuable clue," Adrian Skillet suggested. "You can tell me, perhaps, Miss Crapple, who the young man is who was refused permission to see Miss Sanders. Her father would, no doubt, have informed you, so that no meetings might take place near the school."

"That is something I cannot understand," replied Miss Crapple. "I am sure nothing of the kind has ever happened. Mr. Sanders himself was here on a visit less than a month ago, and if there had been any cause for greater vigilance over his daughter, I am sure he would have confided in me."

The young lady who had been sent for came, and Adrian Skillet cross-examined her about many things for about fifteen minutes, and then dismissed her.

"Let us go and see Miss Deering again," he said, "I want to have this question about the young man cleared up. We will ask a few direct questions."

They went toward her room. In the hallway they met the nurse just returning. She said the girl had been brought to, and seemed all right now, and that she—the nurse—had gone down to the kitchen to prepare something Miss Deering had specially requested.

When they arrived at the bedroom the bed was empty—the girl had disappeared!

Consternation was in the faces of all save the detective. She was gone, it was clear, but she was not going to get away from him in a few minutes like that.

"Do not be alarmed," he said reassuringly. "I will find her."

How he did it need not be recapitulated here. The remarkable skill with which he could follow an apparently invisible trail was the very foundation of all his greatness. He went out to the hall way to the lower floor, and out into the garden with something of the instinct with which the hound follows the trail. Across the the ground towards a small wood, which he penetrated, and found, as he had expected, that the wall surrounding the college grounds skirted this wood. Upon the top of this wall sat the object of his search. She had dressed herself very hastily, yet there was little in her appearance to excite remark.

The road was well travelled, and many people passed while the detective watched her. She concealed herself adroitly, by means of an overhanging branch of a tree as each pedestrian neared where she sat.

Presently a boy chanced along. This was apparently what she had been waiting for. She called him, and when he approached, held towards him a note and some coins, while she explained what she wished him to do. At this moment the detective approached, and so startled was the girl at his appearance that he possessed himself of the note before she was aware of it. It was addressed to Mr. Edward Trevelyan, of Coreham. This was strong evidence that the man he now wished to find lived in that town. He blew a whistle, which was the signal agreed upon, and two of the college assistants came up in a few minutes, into whose charge he gave Miss Deering.

Then he started on his way to Coreham. As he walked he opened the note and mused upon it. It ran:

"DEAR MR. TREVELYAN,—You are in terrible danger.

A Prisoner for Seventeen Years.

A BIRKENHEAD woman—Mrs. E. McNulty—of 410 Price Street, was practically kept a prisoner within her own house for seventeen years in consequence of a most distressing skin disease. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness completely cured her, and the following is the wonderful story she told to a *Courier* reporter:

"I had enjoyed as good health as anyone could desire until about seventeen years ago, when after attending upon a neighbour's little girl who was down with scarlet fever I contracted the disease myself. In a matter of seven weeks I recovered, but remained for several months in so weak a state that I could scarcely walk across the floor. I was racked with fearful pains in the head; so bad were they at times that I could hardly see. After nine months' suffering I saw a doctor, but he did not effect any good. I then lost my appetite, and anything I ate seemed to make my head worse.

"Then a new development appeared. A fearful rash broke out all over my face. I took every kind of medicine to clear my blood but they only had the effect of making me worse. My face was so bad that I was ashamed to venture out of my house. I was kept a prisoner within doors.

"After trying more medicines and visiting several doctors, I went to the Skin Hospital in Liverpool. There I was examined by many doctors, and underwent a painful operation; but when they told me at length that I should have to have my nose scraped, I was frightened, and I never went again.

"After a number of years of this terrible suffering, I commenced to have a succession of week-end bilious attacks with remarkable regularity. I can safely say that, for upwards of two years, I never knew what it was to be without a bilious attack on Sunday, which prostrated me for the whole day.

"One day (it was a Wednesday) on coming downstairs, I found a little book under the door, telling of the wonderful cures which had been effected by Charles Forde's Bile Beans. I procured a box, and took one of the beans before I went to bed that night. The next morning my head did not feel so heavy, so I continued taking the Beans, and began to feel better and stronger every day. One Sunday when it came to be my usual time to be prostrated with biliousness, I got the dinner ready and sat down and ate a hearty meal, without the least sign of any illness!

"My husband said, 'Whatever is the matter with you to-day? Are you not going to be ill?' Then I told him how I had taken the Bile Beans, and as soon as he saw that they had had such a wonderful effect on me, he sent out for another box. By degrees the rash and spots began to disappear from my face, until I had as clear a complexion as anyone could desire.

"I feel now as though I don't know my own strength, and am as well and hearty as I was when I was a girl of fourteen. Well, that," pointing to a huge basket full of clothes which she had just washed, "is evidence that I am strong enough. For the last four months I have had from seven to ten dozen clothes, and sometimes more, every week, and I have washed them all myself. What is more, I have felt nothing worse at the end of the day than a natural tired feeling, which a night's sound sleep has removed. There is nothing in which I have greater faith than Bile Beans, and I am sure, now that you have heard my story, you will readily understand that."

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I have told a story, which may shield you for a time. But if you are guilty—which at this moment I refuse to believe, though every fact tells me so—I pray you hide yourself at the ends of the earth. There must be some excuse. Let me believe that. I have looked upon you as all that a true knight should be, but whether you are what I thought you or a blood-stained murderer, I should still wish to save you. Believe then that there is one that pities you, who forgives, and would do so though the knife were aimed at her own heart. But fly, fly at once, for you are even now being tracked.—F.D."

"Well that is as daft a letter as I ever read," muttered the detective. "And yet the girl has suffered enough to make her so. The facts about this crime are clear enough at any rate.

"This proves that her story about the closing doorway was a falsehood, invented to shield the man. That's a good point settled, for it bothered me."

The detective had no difficulty in finding the home of Trevelyan. He lived with his parents. His mother opened the door. No, he was not at home. She called to some one within.

"He said he was going to get shaved," some one said.

The whereabouts of the barber's shop were asked and pointed out, and the detective easily found it. As he entered the place, he noticed a tall young man, just entering.

He had little doubt it was the man he sought. The moustache was identical.

The detective entered by the side door, and was lucky in finding the barber in the rear of his shop. Through a screen the man in the front part of the shop could be plainly seen. He had taken a seat, and was awaiting the appearance of the man of shears and brush. The detective in a few words explained to the barber the necessity for assuming the position of an assistant for a time, and such was the barber's astonishment, that the detective had divested the barber of his garment and put it on himself before that worthy realised it. He must have been hypnotised.

The detective walked out into the shop. The man was lying back with closed eyes.

"Hurry up," he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the pseudo barber, getting his soap and brush ready.

The man closed his eyes again. There were dark rings under them.

"Judging from the face, he's a bad 'un," said the detective, but he proceeded with the shaving as though it had been his business.

"I heard a good story the other day," he said, lathering his man, "it was about a curious crime."

"Crime!" gasped the man. "What sort of a crime?"

"Murder," replied the detective, trying the razor on his thumb-nail. "The most curious part about it was that the evidence that convicted the man was furnished by a barber. It seems that the murderer had left behind him a single hair from his moustache.

"This was found by a detective, and enabled him to trace his man. It was just such a hair as this"—and the detective held in one hand the hair he had found. "When the man went to be shaved, the barber drew a hair out of the man's moustache, so!"

He plucked out a hair with a quick movement, and held the two beneath the powerful magnifying glass he carried.

"The barber examined the hairs beneath a glass, as I have done," continued the detective, "then he turned to the man, and said, 'There can be no doubt, it is absolutely certain, you are the murderer of Bessie Sanders!'"

The young man leapt from the chair with a hoarse cry. There was no need for confession. His face proclaimed his guilt.

It was a terrible ordeal. Who could have his guilt thus thrust upon him and be calm?

The detective put down his razor.

With a quick plunge the man seized it, and tried to bring it across his throat. But the detective was too quick and too strong. "And now Mr. Edward Trevelyan," he said.

"Yes," replied a pleasant voice at his elbow, "what can I do for you?"

Here was a surprise that was too much for the detective. He turned, and confronted another young man, who in many respects was a counterpart of the other, especially so as to the moustache.

The real barber, astonished at what he had seen and heard, now came out into his shop.

"Who is this?" asked the detective.

"Percy Manton. Everybody about here knows him."

"Well, Percy Manton. I arrest you for the murder of Bessie Sanders."

"No you don't. Nobody arrests me. I did it, and Heaven knows I'm glad to get it off my mind, and this is how I do it."

There was another razor lying near, and this time he seized it and carried it to his throat, with such force as to nearly sever his head.

The explanation was simple enough, and the detective had easily deduced it. Percy Manton, a reckless and dissipated fellow, had been in love with Bessie, and she with him. Indeed they had been married secretly, as the registrar's record showed. That was a year ago. In the meantime, Bessie Sanders' father had failed and was practically a beggar, though his daughter did not know of it, and he did not intend that she should until he had tried to recover. Percy Manton had learnt this, and as he had meantime made considerable love to another young lady, whose wealth was great and certain, he wished to get rid of the old love and take on with the new. So much for the motive for the murder.

Bessie had kept her love affair secret from her chum, for Miss Deering knew Percy Manton as a worthless character, and would not have permitted his entrance to the room.

So Bessie, to effect this, had said that it was Edward Trevelyan she wished to have call, and Miss Deering, loving him as she did, and believing him to be good and true, permitted it. The way the selfish plot worked out is easily seen, Percy Manton knew that Miss Deering thought him to be Trevelyan when he called, and he knew that his crime would be laid upon the other man unless by good luck it passed for suicide.

Miss Deering, loving Trevelyan herself passionately, had, nevertheless like a noble and loving woman, kept silence, and kept most discreetly out of the way when the visit occurred.

But her reward came. The terrible tragedy revealed the deception under which she had laboured. The fact was that Trevelyan really loved her. But, when ever they had chanced to see each other, she believing him the lover of her friend, had treated him most coldly, and that he kept his distance. All this is changed now for the faithful little schoolgirl won the love she craved, and she has long been the happiest of happy girls.

H. CLIFFORD.

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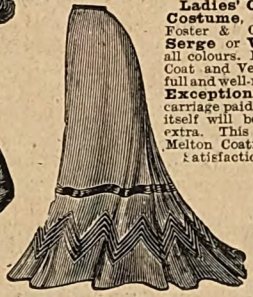

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A woman cannot possibly look plain or unattractive if she uses the famous DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES. She will be as fair as a lily, and wrinkles will not appear until she is far advanced in life. This may seem impossible to you, but it is the plain truth. The Perles are not a cosmetic, remember, but a food for the skin. They make ladies of 40 look to be less than 30. If from any cause you have reason to be ashamed of your face, you should commence taking these famous Perles without delay. They are bound to effect an improvement in your appearance. Thousands of men and women, with unhealthy, blotchy or muddy skins, are grateful for having taken DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES

WHY NOT TRY THEM?—If you would like to test DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES send three stamps for dainty booklet, "Beauty is Power," and FREE TRIAL BOX, or 2/6 postal order for a large-size box. All boxes sent in plain packages, post free. Address: The Rose Remedy Co. Dept , St Albans, England.

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A New Feature.

In Confidence.

Conducted by Madge Morris.

I HAVE been invited by the Editor of *Short Stories* to conduct this new feature. He considers that I am qualified to offer advice on matters of the heart, because I have given the subject very careful study since I was quite a young child.

To those readers of *Short Stories* who do not see *Pearson's Weekly* my name will be unfamiliar; therefore, before going further, I think it will be as well for me to introduce myself—or, rather, to allow myself to be introduced to you by the Editor of *Pearson's Weekly*. To do this, all that is necessary is for me to reproduce here a paragraph which appeared in a recent number of that paper:

I AM going to tell you in confidence quite a little romance which affects a charming young lady whose work you will soon have an opportunity of enjoying. About a fortnight ago I received a letter, asking that the writer might have a personal interview with me. Two days later a charming young lady was ushered into my room. Her name (and I have her full permission for giving it) is Madge Morris. She very rapidly and clearly laid her case before me. She was engaged to a hard-working young clerk whose position was a modest one and whose finances would not permit of his marrying for many years unless he got some substantial increase in his salary. As this seemed so far off, Miss Madge determined to make money on her own account. She has a good education, but has never learnt a trade or profession. Her parents, who, though not well-off, are proud, will not let her work in a shop or factory. They do not object to her marriage with the young man, whom they like. When Miss Morris got so far in her narrative she smilingly handed me a manuscript, and said that she had determined, by writing articles and stories, to save enough money to enable her to get married! As she had never written in her life before, I had my doubts about the value of the stuff. After reading it, however, I saw at once she had some strikingly brilliant ideas, and knew how to put them down. The result of her visit was an order for half-a-dozen articles on a subject she had chosen—"Lessons in Love-Making"—with the promise of an order for more if the first series were appreciated by our readers. This, then, is the origin of the new series which begins in our next issue. I hope you will like it. And remember, as you read it, that its publication is the result of a bright young girl's earnest determination to make money enough to marry the man she loves.

After this paragraph appeared, the series of articles entitled "Lessons in Love-Making" was published, and at the present moment I am contributing another series entitled "Love Problems," which are appearing on the "Home Notes" page of *Pearson's Weekly*.

I hope that you won't think me egotistical for telling you all these things. The truth of the matter is that, as I am not at present known to very many of you, I feel it incumbent upon me to let you see that I am qualified to conduct this new feature.

The lines on which they will be run are as follows:

Any young girl or young man whose love affairs are not running smoothly—and, of course, when it is true love it will not run smoothly—is invited to consult with me. I don't want to pose as a sort of lady Solomon, who will mete out justice in a domineering sort of fashion. I want to be just who I am, and to offer advice to those who are willing to, at all events, consider it, even if they don't accept it.

There are many points which a young girl or young man in love does not care to discuss with parents or friends, and yet would be willing to write to someone whom they have never seen before and in whom they have a certain amount of confidence. This position I am willing to occupy.

I shall treat every communication in strict confidence—in fact, I don't want even your name and address, a *nom de plume* will do quite as well. All I ask is that any love problem you may set before me to unravel shall be a genuine one; I don't want to waste my own time or the time of my readers in discussing points in a case which is simply concocted in idle moments by some idle young person.

And now, if you feel that I have justified your confidence in me, don't fail to let me know when you are in trouble, and I will do my best to give you a helping hand.

This feature will not be confined to love affairs only—that is, to those between single young men and young women—but tangles that occur in domestic life and even points of etiquette will be dealt with. I am not qualified to tell you how to build a house, or borrow money, or buy a horse, but I am qualified to answer any problem you may care to set into which affairs of the heart enter largely.

All communications should be addressed to me personally.

MADGE MORRIS.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

IN these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, January 20th, 1902.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 19. BEHEADINGS.

1. I am in the future—behead me, and I am a bird.
2. I am a rock—behead me, and I am a sound; behead me again, and I am a number.
3. I am to find fault—behead me, and I am not warm; again, and I am not young.
4. I am an implement—behead me, and I am a meanly-built house.
5. I am to slay—behead me, and I am not well.

No. 20. SQUARE WORD.

From equivalents of the following form a square word:
To penetrate.
Courage.
The plural of the general name of a well-known plant.
A happening.
Part of a verb meaning to be quiet.

No. 21. ACROSTIC.

The initials of the following read downwards will form the name of a popular game:

An English river.
A town in India.
A town in Switzerland.
A town in the North of England.
A river in Germany.
A town in Ireland.
A town in Scotland.
One of the British possessions.
An English county,
A country in Europe.
A mountain in Arabia.

No. 22.

A GEOGRAPHICAL GUESS-WHAT.

A boy named (a town in Australia) went for a walk with his sister, whose name was (a lake in Switzerland). (A lake in Switzerland) presently got a (a town in North Germany) in her foot, and (a town in Australia) was in great (cape in North America) lest he should not be able to get it out, as it was so (islands in the west of Scotland), but at last it came out. While they were resting in the shade, and eating the (islands in the Pacific) which their mother had given them, the (island off the coast of Scotland) became (a sea of Europe) and (a bay in New Zealand), and they had to hasten home before the storm. As they were returning, they saw a (islands off Tasmania) with a (village in Scotland) which he had shot. Before they reached home it began to rain, and the children had to (a cape of North America) to escape a wetting.

No. 23. ENIGMA.

I never was in a territory,
But I'm always in a state.
I have never been in destiny,
Yet ever I am in fate.

I am not be seen in the clear blue sky,
But I live in the deep blue sea,
I am found in the clustering islands,
But not in the greenwood tree.

Without me you cannot travel,
I am needful in the way,
And though I am shut out of every night,
I come proudly in by day.

Now children should easily tell what I am,
'Tis a simple name to say;
I'm not in their romps, but I'm in their games,
And I help them in their play.

No. 24. ADDED WORDS.

Add a word meaning to strike to a possessive pronoun and then add a preposition. The whole forms an adverb of time.

Whether You Are a Pretty Girl or a Plain Brainy Girl

It is always interesting to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are,
If you want to know.

WHETHER YOU ARE GENEROUS OR MEAN,
WHETHER YOU ARE INDUSTRIOUS OR LAZY,
WHETHER YOU ARE CARELESS OR CAREFUL,
WHETHER YOU ARE COLD OR LOVABLE,
WHETHER YOU ARE NICE OR OTHERWISE,

Send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

Inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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BY A REMEDY THAT HAS ENABLED MANY TO ABANDON CRUTCH AND CANE.

Trial Package FREE

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At times he was so helpless that he had to take to morphine, and after considerable doctoring he gave up in despair. He began studying into the causes of **rheumatism**; after much experimenting he finally hit upon a combination of drugs which completely cured him. The result was so beneficial to his entire system that he called his new-found remedy "Gloria Tonic." Those of his friends and relatives and neighbours suffering from rheumatism were next cured, and Mr. Smith concluded to offer his remedy to the world. But he found the task a difficult one, as nearly everybody had tried a hundred or more remedies, and they couldn't be made to believe that there was such a thing as a cure for rheumatism. But an old gentleman from Sequin wrote him saying if Mr. Smith would send him a sample he would try it, but as he had suffered forty-one years and wasted a fortune with doctors and advertised remedies, he wouldn't buy anything more until he knew it was worth something. The sample was sent; he purchased more, and the result was astonishing. He was completely cured. This gave Mr. Smith a new idea, and ever since that time he has been sending out free sample packages to all who apply. The result is that he is now the happy possessor of **thousands of testimonials** from people throughout the world who have been both greatly benefited and **entirely cured** by "Gloria Tonic." Prominent physicians had to admit that "**Gloria Tonic**" is a positive success, among them Dr. Quintero, of the University of Venezuela, to whom it was recommended by the United States Consul. In thousands of other instances the result has been the same. It cured many cases which defied Hospitals, Drugs, Electricity, and Medical Skill.

JOHN A. SMITH.

"Gloria Tonic" **cured** Mrs. H. Bester, of Welton, near Daventry, who has suffered for years. Mr. L. Pinkey, 3 Well Lane, Bridlington, a martyr to Rheumatism for 27 years, has been entirely cured through its use. Mr. J. Holden, of 28 Angles Road, Streatham, S.W., is an enthusiast over "Gloria Tonic." A neighbour of Mr. Holden, Mr. J. Crampton, 24 Angles Road, Streatham, S.W., says: "I can recommend 'Gloria Tonic' to all who suffer with Rheumatism, as I am thankful to say that your remedy has **cured me entirely.**"

The following people have also been entirely **cured** through the use of "Gloria Tonic" attested to by testimonials which they have sent me: Mrs. J. Brewer, 59 St. Ann's Rd., Barking, E.; Mr. T. Marsh, 190 Bury New Rd., Whitefield, Lancs.; Mr. J. Metcalf, Hill Gill Farm, Mallerstang, Kirkby Stephen; Mrs. West, The Club, Surbiton: Mr. G. Chennells, 11 Waterend, near Hemel Hempstead; Mrs. G. Hiron, 39 Stanley St., Queen's Rd., S.W.; Mr. E. Guest, Bissell St., Quinton, near Birmingham; Mrs. Sanderson, 22 West Park Rd., Newport, Mon.; Mr. L. Leyshon, 2 Gwindy Terrace, Pentrechwyth; Mrs. W. Smith, Appiehouse, Tronston, Sandwick, Stromness; Mr. J. Helmsley, Hadlow Down, near Uckfield; Mr. P. Haslem, 32 Tanners Terrace, Mr. G. Mackay, Embo Dornoch, Sutherlandshire; Mr. Ramsbottom; J. Little, South Marston, Stretton St. Margaret's, Swindon.

Can I offer you better proofs of the merits of my remedy? These are only a few of **hundreds of testimonials** of recent date which I now hold.

On receipt of a postal card or a letter from you, mentioning this paper, you will receive by return of post, FREE, a trial package of "Gloria Tonic" a booklet on Rheumatism, and other literature of great interest to sufferers. Address—

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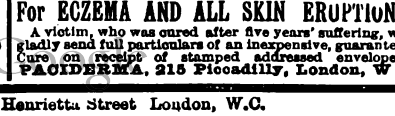

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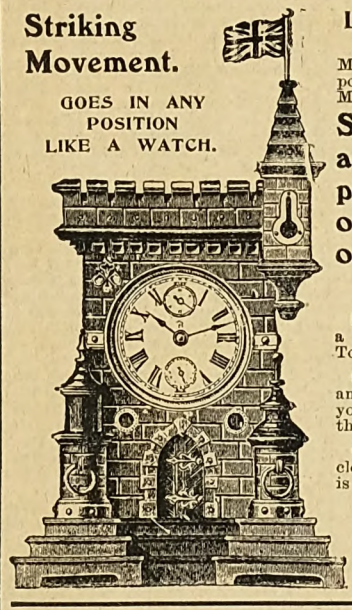

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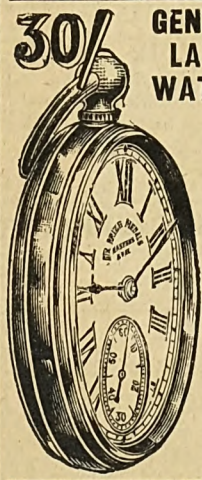

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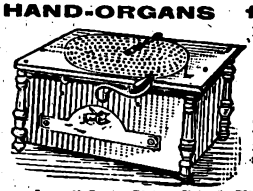

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 681.] For the Week Ending January 18th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

A BRIDE BY DESTINY.

By R. Norman Silver.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGINAL OF A PORTRAIT.

"WHEN you have finished that, Miss Hamilton, you might step down into the shop for an hour—they are short-handed this afternoon. I have spoken to Madame about sparing you."

"Yes, Mr. Randegger," was the quiet response, and the girl at the nearer extremity of the battered wooden table went on with the deft movements that were completing a magnificent bouquet of orchids, from which hung delicate green streamers of smilax.

The face bent over the splendid blossoms had been raised momentarily; it was grave, even a trifle proud, the eyes, however, added a certain sweetness, and the features were both fine and regular. There were prettier countenances round the flower-laden work-bench in the bare apartment, but none more striking and characteristic.

A row of square, uncurtained windows flooded the low-ceiled place with autumn sunshine and framed vivacious views of the smartest shopping quarter in the metropolis. The sashes were open, but the atmosphere, nevertheless, was oppressed by a medley of perfumes—the scents of roses, lilies, carnations, violets, and the curious, unfamiliar odours of rarer growths.

The clever West-end tradesman was studying the mass of glorious blooms on which his employee was engaged; a band of white heather, built up as he watched, incircled them like a belt of unsullied snow. He twirled a neat Imperial with a lean finger and thumb, then shot out an arm and manipulated several of the orchids.

"*So!*" he said, and made a significant "foreign" gesture; "but it is very good, you keep life in the flowers—life and air. *Peste!*" he broke off, "the shop—I am forgetting the shop!"

A couple of strides—oddly suggestive of a dancing-master's fantastic motions—carried Mr. Randegger, a stout, volatile Italian, towards the door. On the threshold he halted and glanced back.

"You will be down soon, Miss Hamilton?" was his reminder; "yet—yet do not hasten regardlessly; I, myself promised Lord Quantock that the bouquets should be perfection—*perfection!*" Another eloquent flourish, and the speaker had disappeared.

"What folly," said a vigorous, middle-aged woman, whose black silk blouse, sharp self-possession, and seat at the top of the table marked her for the mistress of the small staff; "it is I who need help, not the shop. The Quantock bouquets will be late, that is all. Eunice, child, have you much more to do?"

"No, Madame Brissac," answered Eunice Hamilton, getting up to show the state of her task. The chief florist nodded appreciation.

"Excellent!" she commented; "you are a feather in Mr. Randegger's cap, little one, for he took you into the room against my advice. I believed you too inexperienced to come in as an improver, and too old to enter as an apprentice. I should have remembered that you American girls are different from the English."

She glanced shrewdly at the subject of this compliment. "You are wearing a new ornament," observed the Frenchwoman, "the charm at your throat. I thought I saw a handsome face—has some gallant monsieur been offering you his portrait as a love-token?"

Eunice blushed, put the finished bouquet on a stand and lifted the article to which Madame Brissac's inquiry had related. It was a gold disc—the size of a crown piece—modelled to resemble a diminutive shield. An amethyst formed the boss, and the edge was set with a circle of minute diamonds. A miniature occupied the reverse of the ornament—depicting a youthful, masculine visage, gay and resolute. The vividly blue pupils were frank and generous, but the full, clean-shaven jaw and upper lip revealed an unusual degree of determination. The result was that mingling of strength and candour so attractive to a feminine critic.

"It must have been my mother's," said Eunice Hamilton; "I found it yesterday evening in a bag of buttons—I expect it was mislaid by accident, perhaps years ago. There is a date on the picture—eighteen eighty-three or five; I don't know who it is, though."

The chief florist surveyed the miniature.

"Why is the face not strange to me," she queried absently; "whom can it recall? It is English, and I have few English friends. Ah, yes, it is like the young gentleman who came with Lord Quantock to decide upon the bouquets. I heard his name mentioned—Mr.—Mr. Carr."

"Oh, no, Madame," cried Eunice; "the portrait is much—much handsomer."

"How should you tell, child?" retorted her superior; "you did not see him—Mr. Randegger sent up for me."

Eunice coloured.

"Mr. Carr was often in the shop," she explained; "while I was downstairs—I—I used to serve him."

Madame Brissac smiled.

"Eunice," she declared, "you are an innocent of the most amusing. So Mr. Carr is *coquet*—a flirt, is he? Well, he is about to *ranger* himself—to marry. Miss Nita Warwick, the future Madame Carr, is to be of the bridesmaids at Lord Quantock's wedding—Mr. Carr, Mr. Austin Carr, will be the bridegroom's friend—his best man, as you say. I read it all in your paper *The Gossip*. What a droll title is that for a journal!"

Eunice turned the jewelled shield to hide—as it rested on her bosom—the picture of the unknown whose claim to exceptional beauty she had been so quick to champion.

"Shall I go down now, Madame?" she asked.

The Frenchwoman devoted herself afresh to her occupation—she had been indicating, by rapid pencil-strokes, a design for an enormous harp, of chrysanthemums and tuberoses.

"Yes," was the answer; "and if you ever serve Mr

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Carr again compare him with your miniature—there is a resemblance certainly."

Evading further discussion, Eunice hurried out of the workroom and descended to the great fruit and flower emporium controlled by Antonio Randegger, and famous in two hemispheres as "Randy's."

The Italian nodded to her as she entered, and for the succeeding half-hour she was engrossed by the demands of a dozen customers—whose requirements varied between a ten-guinea floral emblem—for presentation to a burlesque actress—and a shilling camellia for an amateur tenor's dress-coat.

She had only just concluded the latter transaction when a remark—uttered at her elbow—startled her.

"It is," said a harsh, but bantering voice, subdued to the cautious tones that seldom pass beyond the ears for which they are intended; "it is Miss Gravity, and no other. Where on earth have you been?"

Eunice looked up. By her stood a person still apparently in his earlier twenties. An immaculate silk hat and fashionable coat bore witness to his social position, his complexion was high, his teeth—uncovered by beard or moustache—even and perfect, his demeanour boyish. But this mouth betrayed the vulgar selfishness of the Society idler, and his eyes gleamed with a slow, insolent humour.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Carr," rejoined Eunice swiftly "what do you wish—" She hesitated, checked by a shrug of the brown-coated shoulders.

"Rubbish!" snapped Austin Carr; "I was getting back to the club from a late luncheon but caught sight of you through the glass and popped in. As I'm here you might give me a button-hole—carnations, for choice."

The girl prepared a cluster of the indicated blossoms and fitted them to the purchaser's lappel.

Austin Carr grinned unpleasantly.

"Quite a treat, this," he assured her; "and how have you concealed yourself? I had almost abandoned the idea of stumbling upon you once more."

"I'm in the work-room," rejoined Eunice, pinning the carnations dexterously. "Mr. Randegger wanted me down to-day because he was short-handed, but I make up, as a rule."

"Oh," said Mr. Carr, "with flowers, not grease-paint. If it's promotion I suppose I ought to congratulate you, but, by Jove, you don't deserve it. Not every man in my class would ask a girl in yours to marry him, and prove he was serious by offering her a ring worth fi—fifty pounds. I'll admit you declined the confounded thing, but I was a fool to swallow the snub—a dashed fool."

"Please," she begged, "don't. I—I didn't care for you, I don't think you cared for me—it was a mere fancy. Be sensible, Mr. Carr, you are going to marry Miss Warwick. I do hope you will be happy."

Austin Carr drew out a handful of silver and paid for his button-hole. "Yes," he conceded, with a hiccough, "Nita's accepted me; she's a daisy, is Nita, and she doesn't bore a fellow. But it was you I—loved, Eunice. Why did you say 'No'? The governor's a soft-hearted sort and he'd have forgiven me."

Mr. Carr stopped abruptly, staring past Eunice Hamilton. His querulous expression disappeared, he straightened himself and, waiving the formality of a farewell, moved off.

Eunice glanced in the same direction. A dainty figure had stepped from a cab at the pavement-edge to the shop-door. It was that of a woman, wearing a costly furred ulster and seal toque.

"Hullo, Austin!" she ejaculated; "what luck! You can buy me some roses—some Vilanelles. Paulette has disappointed me of a frock I was to sport at your governor's little feed this evening, and I must manage with an ancient turquoise abomination. So I need a few pink roses for the corsage, and the Vilanelles are the most recent miracle, besides being deliciously expensive."

She strode towards Eunice.

"Send me six or seven loose Vilanelle roses immediately," she said; "Miss Nita Warwick, Quantock House, Belgrave Square."

Eunice bowed and noted Miss Warwick's brief command. The Vilanelles were a pink rose of exquisite shape, blanched at the tips of the petals, and deepening to a splash of tawny crimson at their base. Austin Carr discharged the bill—it left him a florin out of a brace of gold coins.

"So nice of you!" declared Nita Warwick; "you shall be allowed to give me a cup of tea before I rush home to dress—a dinner to-night and a wedding to-morrow. I was born for excitement! Have you seen that bit in *The Gossip*? You'll have to settle with Sir Roland about us, Austin, or there'll be a shocking amount of talk."

The final sentence was delivered as they strolled out of the shop, but it reached Eunice, notwithstanding. Not that she noted its significance particularly. She had had recourse to the jewelled disc at her throat and was examining the miniature.

"It is not—it cannot be Mr. Carr," she murmured; "the date is too far back. And yet it is like him, rather."

Her reflections over the pictured countenance were interrupted by the crisp accents of her employer. Antonio Randegger had crossed unperceived, a note in his fingers.

"Miss Hamilton," he began, "some flowers were ordered for a dinner-party. They are gone, but there was a mistake in the office, and no one is booked to arrange them. All our decorators are out; you will have to fill the gap."

"Yes, sir," assented Eunice nervously; "I will do my best. When must I go?"

"At once," said the Italian; "I have told them to whistle a hansom—the flowers are at the house. The address is Grosvenor Gardens, Sir Roland Fanshawe's. He is a bachelor—Mrs. Dundas, his sister, is directing the dinner. Run and get ready, and do not quiver so much—bah, I trust you, let that be sufficient."

Eunice obeyed. As she mounted the gloomy flights which led to the workroom, she was wondering why the address given her a moment before should sound familiar.

The solution of the mystery flashed upon her. Sir Roland! it was the name mentioned by Miss Nita Warwick. Could the Sir Roland Fanshawe to whose residence she was bound, be identical with Miss Warwick's Sir Roland—the "governor," who must be informed of Mr. Carr's betrothal to Nita Warwick?

It seemed improbable. Mr. Randegger had intimated that Sir Roland Fanshawe was unmarried; if the other Sir Roland was Austin Carr's father, he must be Sir Roland Carr. Eunice left the problem unsolved, went down to the cab summoned for her, and drove off beneath the fall of the autumn dusk.

Sir Roland Fanshawe's mansion in Grosvenor Gardens was similar to its neighbours—large, sombre, stone-fronted. She dismissed the hansom and rang.

"I'm from Mr. Randegger, the florist," she explained to the servant, who acknowledged her peal; "I am to do the table decorations."

"Yes, miss," responded the man, and he piloted her

Involuntarily he sprang back, regarding her as if she had been a ghost.

through a luxurious hall into a lofty chamber, panelled with oak, and boasting a carved oak fireplace. An expanse of gleaming damask shone under the electric light, an ideal field for her operations.

Eunice passed in, unfastening her gloves. She brushed against an unseen obstacle—it was a massive vase, planted haphazard on the thick pile hearth-rug.

The footman rolled it to a corner.

"Sir Roland is changing the position of some pottery, miss," Eunice was notified; "he is a collector of rare china; we have pots in the house, miss (aye, and ugly brutes, too), worth thousands of pounds."

"Indeed!" observed Eunice, wisely declining further conversation on the point; "will you please fetch me the hampers that were brought this afternoon, and let Mrs. Dundas know that I have arrived?"

"Certainly, miss," said the servant, and vanished, with silent speed. Eunice, having removed her gloves, doffed her hat and jacket, and began to consider the task she had accepted. So absorbed did she grow that she did not perceive the entrance of a well-knit figure of middle height wearing a smoking-jacket, who carried in his arms a superb Sevres bowl.

A board creaked beneath his tread. Eunice spun about and the bearer of the bowl saw her. Involuntarily he sprang back, regarding her as if she had been a ghost. The priceless china escaped from his grasp, to be shivered at his feet.

Eunice gazed also, incredulous and astounded. For the face of the newcomer was the face of the miniature on her bosom.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD LOVE'S POWER.

"MY dear Roland, what was the crash? Good Heavens, the Mazarin bowl! How did it happen?"

A smooth-skinned, dark-haired woman, graceful, stylish, and not without a degree of personal charm to balance the loss of her first youth, advanced into the dining-room where, a moment earlier, Eunice Hamilton had made such a singular discovery.

A stalwart figure, moving as if in a dream, stepped towards the questioner.

"Coralie," she was asked softly; "am I bereft of my senses, or is there someone else present—someone besides ourselves?"

The other glanced across the apartment and started. Eunice shivered to perceive how strangely she was being regarded.

"I'm afraid I surprised this—this gentleman," she stammered; "and—and caused an accident. I'm from Randegger's to do the table decorations; the footman showed me in here. Can I see Mrs. Dundas, please?"

"I am Mrs. Dundas," said the younger of the two intruders; "and you are the image of a—a lady my brother, Sir Roland Fanshawe, and I knew long since.

Pray excuse our agitation—the mishap to the bowl was, I am sure, not the least little bit your fault. Sir Roland must have been unnerved by your resemblance to our friend."

Roland Fanshawe caught at his sister's arm.

"Coralie," he murmured; "look, she is wearing the shield miniature I gave to——" He paused abruptly, his face white and his lips tremulous.

Mrs. Dundas drew nearer to the possessor of the ornament which had attracted her brother's attention.

"Will you tell me your name, my dear?" she inquired—Eunice noticed that she signed to Sir Roland as though to check his excitement. "And how you obtained the picture you have at your throat?"

"I am Eunice Hamilton," rejoined Eunice; "the miniature was my mother's; but, oh," she interrupted herself, "if only the vase had not been smashed; it was so beautiful, and must have been worth a great deal."

She stooped to the pieces—a simple, pathetic attitude.

Sir Roland gazed down at her.

"You—you say it *was* your mother's," he faltered; "is—is she dead?"

"Yes," answered Eunice sadly, halting in her attempt to fit the splendid fragments together; "she died at New Orleans a year ago."

"Pardon my apparent inquisitiveness, Miss Hamilton," said Roland Fanshawe—and his voice had grown hoarse and broken—"but that shield and portrait were a gift to a—a lady—a Miss Eunice Carruthers, who married a certain Wilfred Hamilton. Both were friends of mine—I take you to be their child."

"Father was Wilfred Hamilton," replied Eunice, "and I am called Eunice, after my mother—her maiden name was Carruthers."

"Mr. Hamilton," queried Sir Roland more collectedly, "is, I trust, living?"

Eunice shook her head.

"He died before I was sixteen," she explained; "mother never got over his death. She did not wish me to remain in the States, and when I was left alone—I have no brothers or sisters—I came to London, to some acquaintances of hers. They were not rich people, and they got me into Randegger's. I have never heard of you, Sir Roland, but yesterday I found this ornament among a lot of odds and ends. I recognised you from it as soon as I saw you, and oh, I am sorry about the bowl."

Roland Fanshawe raised her courteously.

"A fig for the bowl," he said. "I would have sacrificed a dozen such to bring about this meeting."

A light footfall sounded on the carpet—the servant had returned with a couple of neat hampers, lettered "Randegger." The shattered vase lay in his path; he stopped, astounded.

"Well," answered Sir Roland sharply; "can't you understand that there has been an accident? Have the mess brushed up. Why are you carrying those baskets about?"

"They are for me," put in Eunice; "the flowers I am to arrange."

"Nonsense!" cried Roland Fanshawe; "let one of the maids do it. Your parents, Miss Hamilton," he added, "were more to me than you can imagine—their daughter is an honoured guest beneath my roof."

Eunice Hamilton blushed.

"Mr. Randegger employs me," she objected; "and I must do my duty. Then I have not been trusted before with table decorations—I wanted to prove that I could manage them."

Sir Roland smiled; his grave features relaxed, and, despite the silver on his temples, looked as gay as his portrait in the shield at Eunice's throat.

"Your will is law," he responded. "Simmons, set down those hampers and clear away that broken china. Coralie, I owe Miss Hamilton an explanation for treating her as if she were a ghost. While she works (since she must be permitted to satisfy her conscience) I will tell her the true reason for the smashed bowl. Unless, of course, I shall interfere with her operations."

"N—not at all," said Eunice shyly; she had been studying the original of the miniature and felt herself (she knew not why) fascinated by his quiet earnestness and the distinction stamped upon his worn countenance. Also, she was curious as to the cause of his previous excitement.

Roland Fanshawe bowed his thanks and took up a position on the hearthrug, where he might watch the proceedings of the girl in whom he had betrayed such a peculiar interest.

Mrs. Dundas glanced from her brother to Eunice—a swift, penetrating scrutiny that lingered on each for a second.

"I hope to have a chat with Miss Hamilton myself," she observed, "when your explanation is completed, Roland. At present I must go and see about the wine for dinner."

She nodded kindly to Eunice and glided from the room. Eunice began to sort the contents of the hampers. Sir Roland, abandoning his station by the fire-place, had crossed the floor and leant upon a corner of the sideboard.

"Miss Hamilton," he said, "as a young man of twenty I knew and loved your mother, a girl of nineteen, yet even at that age beautiful, with a rare and striking beauty. The miniature you wear I had painted for her at a time whose memories I have not ceased to cherish; she accepted it, and with it the offer of my heart."

Eunice's brown orbs met those of Roland Fanshawe and dropped again.

"Your father," went on Sir Roland, "was my friend—a magnificent fellow, passionate, eloquent, brilliant; your mother made his acquaintance and learnt, in a flash, that she had never loved me. I guessed the secret, released her, and shot elephants in Africa till after they were married. A tempting appointment persuaded your father to sail for America—nor have I heard of him since. I believed him and his wife happy and prosperous, or I should have sought to aid them."

He contemplated the deft fingers of Eunice Hamilton; they were weaving into a delicate pattern on the expanse of rich damask thin strands of green creeper and the nipped-off stars of huge marguerite daisies, yellow as sunshine.

"I am now thirty-nine and a bachelor," pursued Roland Fanshawe, "so you will admit that I was hard hit, Miss Hamilton. You must be what your mother was at the period to which I have referred—a trifle over nineteen; you are her veritable counterpart. Judge of my emotions on beholding you so unexpectedly. You will fathom them the better if—as is no doubt the case—you care for some fortunate member of my sex, to whom you may or may not have plighted your troth."

Eunice devoted herself to the floral design on the damask.

"I fear I have neither of the qualifications," she said demurely.

Sir Roland lifted his brows.

"No!" he exclaimed; "has the masculine world lost its vision, or are you too exacting?"

"I'm going to send for a policeman and have everyone searched," said Mrs. Dundas.

"I can't say," answered Eunice, commencing to build round the mirror base of a towering epergne a bank of Neapolitan violets; "don't you think," she inquired, looking up suddenly, "that I ought to give you your picture back—mother must have forgotten?"

Roland Fanshawe regarded the ornament as it swung by a modest oxidised chain on Eunice's bosom.

"Why should you?" he queried; "it is favoured in being where it is. Pray suffer it to remain."

A soft scarlet warmed Eunice's cheeks, but she continued her task in silence. Down the middle of the table there had sprung up a device of green and yellow, varied by the darker centres of the great daisies. Eunice brought the epergne she had been decorating from the side-board to place it in position.

Sir Roland caught at it and they adjusted it together—their hands touching; Eunice felt that the palm in contact with hers quivered mysteriously.

"I can't realise you to be a stranger, Miss Hamilton," declared her companion; "you are the embodiment of a remembered face and form which I have kept hidden in my heart for what seems to be a lifetime. Your mother and I were boy and girl playmates—I used to call her Eunice, she to call me Roland—I was her brother, her confidant, her ally, till I wanted to be more."

He hesitated, to proceed reflectively.

"This house," he said, "is full of memories that have haunted it a long while. The night I discovered she loved your father—and—freed her to marry him, she had been dining here. I had taken her in—her gown was white and she had white flowers in her hair."

Roland Fanshawe checked himself. Eunice was gazing at him pitifully. Hitherto she had not seen a man under the influence of keen emotion. Sir Roland's sensitive, handsome features kindled a novel pang in her breast.

"*You* will stay and dine with me this evening?" he pleaded; "Miss Hamilton, I cannot allow you to refuse. I shall believe you a dream, a wraith, a phantom."

Eunice coloured.

"I—I am not fit," she demurred; "my—my dress!"

"What can that matter?" retorted Roland Fanshawe. "Only a few intimates of my sister's and mine are coming; we will say you have just arrived from the country, and that your trunks have gone astray. By Jove, have you hurt yourself?"

The little florist's grasp upon a stout stalk which she was breaking slipped, and her wrist grazed a projection of the silver mouldings on the tall epergne. It produced a shallow cut and the blood stained the skin about the wound.

Sir Roland tore a strip from his handkerchief and bandaged the injury with extravagant tenderness.

"Well, my dear Roland," desired a cheerful voice, "is Miss Hamilton sufficiently enlightened?"

Eunice started back. Mrs. Dundas had entered the room.

Her brother turned to her.

"Quite," he said; "but your pet epergne is responsible for Miss Hamilton receiving a nasty scratch. I have had to play the part of doctor. Coralie," he proceeded, interrupting Mrs. Dundas' expressions of sympathy, "persuade Miss Hamilton to remain and dine. I have suggested a convenient fib to account for her morning gown."

Mrs. Dundas shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, you men!" she cried; "they have no real sense, have they, my dear? You must stop, there can be no question of that, but I can lend you a sweet frock I bought in Paris—before Society went into black. I've not worn it, and you're about my figure. I'll send my maid in a cab for it; if it requires altering she's a wonderful needlewoman. You mustn't say 'No'; it is a charming thing and entirely original, so it won't be out of fashion."

"Coralie, you're a genius," exclaimed her brother. "Miss Hamilton, you will stay?"

"Of course she will," responded Mrs. Dundas; "Roland you go and dress, the servants want to finish the table. I shall take charge of Miss Hamilton."

Roland Fanshawe moved towards the door; there was a strange light in his blue eyes as he looked back at the slender form under the glow of the electric lamps.

"If—if I were not forty!" he murmured to himself.

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN'S WILE.

"AUSTIN, come here, I want to introduce you to a new friend of mine—Miss Hamilton, this young gentleman is my nephew and secretary, the son of a dear dead sister and the one responsibility with which the Fates have been pleased to charge me."

Roland Fanshawe had risen from a circular lounge in the middle of a luxurious drawing-room. The sombre black and immaculate white of his evening-dress set off a frame still active and symmetrical. By him was seated a little figure in creamy draperies of mousseline de laine, edged with lustrous gold fringe.

Mrs. Dundas' unworn gown from Paris had proved a veritable creation. It had changed Eunice Hamilton, the demure employee of Antonio Randegger, into a dainty being, all brown locks, bright eyes, and beautiful outlines. The scratch on her wrist was covered by a broad bracelet of pearls and rubies; from her delicate head to her slippered foot Eunice was a thing of tremulous loveliness.

Austin Carr responded languidly to the summons of his uncle; his glance travelled to the face of the woman beside Sir Roland and he recoiled. Eunice started up, flushing scarlet.

"You—you know each other?" asked Roland Fanshawe, struck by their demeanour.

"Y—yes," said Eunice nervously; "Mr. Carr has met me in—in business—he was at the shop to-day."

"Then it is you, Miss Hamilton?" gasped Austin Carr; "excuse my surprise. My dear uncle," he added, "won't you explain; was Miss Hamilton masquerading?"

"Practically," assented Sir Roland; "she is the child of Wilfred Hamilton, and—and a lady who was once very dear to me. She visited us—Miss Hamilton, that is—in the course of her professional duties, and we determined she should play at Cinderella, your aunt taking to the *role* of fairy godmother. Miss Hamilton, I must make you acquainted with a person in whom Austin has a peculiar interest—to wit, Miss Nita Warwick. That is she in the blue silk, speaking to Mrs. Dundas," and he led Eunice off across the splendid apartment.

Austin abandoned himself to reflection. He was disturbed by the rustle of flowing silks, and Nita Warwick sank down at his elbow.

"Well," she observed; "have you seen the Ugly Duckling that has turned into a swan?"

"The deuce!" he growled. "Yes, I can't fathom it."

Nita Warwick fluttered her feather fan. "She was sent from Randegger's to decorate the tables," Austin was told, "and Sir Roland, shifting his eternal pottery, noticed her, dropped three hundred pounds' worth of Sevres, voted it a bagatelle, and persuaded her to remain for dinner. Mrs. Dundas dressed her, and Sir Roland is fast losing his heart to Eunice the Second; you must have heard about that stupid romance of his."

Miss Warwick leant significantly towards her lover.

"Austin," she asked, "what do you propose to maintain me upon if your uncle acts the fool? I'm not inclined to face genteel starvation for the privilege of calling myself Mrs. Carr. We were sure Sir Roland was past the susceptible age, and that he would die a bachelor, after allowing you a comfortable income all his life. But this—this Miss Hamilton may ruin our chances."

"Perhaps the girl isn't genuine," said Austin Carr; "a show-up would nip the whole affair in the bud. We can only hope for the best. As for the governor, he'll stand no interference from me."

"Oh, his find's genuine enough," retorted Nita Warwick; "she has his portrait in a sort of locket—her mother's, the trinket was—Sir Roland gave it her twenty years ago. Don't you comprehend? He'll think it's destiny, and Miss Hamilton will fall a willing victim to your uncle's melancholy grace; look at them now, he worshipping her, she admiring him. Mrs. Dundas won't help us, she's infatuated, too—Eunice the First was a school-friend of hers. Miss Hamilton is wearing a superb ruby bracelet your aunt has lent her."

"Serve the meddlesome old cat right if she pinched it!" snarled Austin, slangily.

Nita Warwick looked at him.

"Austin," she whispered, "that's the very idea; they've never dreamt of inquiring into her character. If there were the least shadow cast on it, Sir Roland would be cured, and you would still be his heir. We may be over-anxious, but I fancy not. However, a stitch in time saves nine."

Her lover stared at her, alarmed.

"Nita!" he exclaimed; "you don't stick at trifles. But—but could it be done?"

Nita got up and shook her skirts into order.

"S—s—*sh*," she murmured; "don't you see how near Mrs. Dundas is. They are going in to dinner—I will think the matter over. You take me in, don't you?"

Her betrothed offered her his arm and they slipped into the impromptu procession that was passing through the door which opened on to the stairs. Sir Roland, evading any superior claims, was at the side of Eunice Hamilton.

During the stately meal he devoted himself to her as much as he might, and Austin Carr's brow grew darker and darker. There was a boyish light in his uncle's countenance, a gaiety in his bearing, a ring in his voice, that Austin had never marked before.

When the ladies rose, Nita Warwick stooped to her betrothed's ear.

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"Leave all to me," she bade him, "I have a plan."

And, permitting him no time to make a rejoinder, she followed the sweeping lace train of Mrs. Dundas. That personage had, unobserved, been watching her curiously. As Miss Warwick passed the retreating Eunice, she spoke to her, and they went out together. Roland Fanshawe gazed after the little figure in the creamy draperies and sighed.

When he entered the drawing-room, he glanced about it inquiringly. The gleam of yellow and white from a distant alcove showed him the whereabouts of Eunice Hamilton. He strolled towards the curtained niche, exchanging a word or two with his feminine guests. Scarcely had he reached it than the hangings parted and Nita Warwick stepped forth—her fan half-folded in her palms.

"Ah, Sir Roland," she said, with veiled malice, "are you in search of Miss Hamilton? She is here, resting, we have been discussing—table decorations."

A ripple of curious merriment broke from her as she passed him. She had arrested, by a meaning glance, the attention of Austin Carr. The latter altered his course and moved towards her.

Roland Fanshawe frowned.

"What a world of snobs!" he muttered; "a woman who could not earn an honest sou to save her life, sneers at one who supports herself by an honourable avocation. Bah! and Austin, they tell me, is enamoured of Miss Nita. Well, each to his taste!" And Sir Roland stepped into the recess.

Nita Warwick gained her lover's side—the smile lingering about her mouth.

"I have something for you," she said, "under my fan. I cannot hide it myself."

"Nita," he whispered; "you—you haven't done it?"

"Oh, I got the thing easily enough," laughed Nita; "it was too large for her. I touched the spring as her wrist lay on the seat by me. I was praising Sir Roland, and she had only thoughts for that. Here, rid me of the nuisance."

Austin Carr trifled with the ends of the ostrich feathers which formed her fan, and she pushed into his fingers Mrs. Dundas' ruby bracelet. He covered it dexterously and slid it into his vest pocket.

There was a step close to them—it was a servant tendering the inevitable coffee-cups. Nita took one, Austin Carr waved the footman away, and they retreated to a lounge not far from the curtained alcove in which Nita Warwick brought off such a momentous coup.

At that instant the rattle of hangings flung by startled them. Roland Fanshawe had tossed back the curtains of the niche behind them, so that the rays from the principal chandelier might illuminate it. Within the recess Eunice was apparently searching.

"Missed!" said Austin, under his breath. "Now to see how he views the situation."

Sir Roland had motioned to his sister. She disengaged herself from a group of his guests and crossed the room.

"Coralie," murmured Roland Fanshawe; "Miss Hamilton is in despair—she has lost a certain bracelet of yours. But it cannot be more than mislaid, for she is confident she had it when she entered this alcove with Miss Warwick a few moments ago. It was rather wide for her wrist, and has doubtless dropped off unnoticed."

Mrs. Dundas made a contemptuous gesture.

"And you believe that," she cried; "a bracelet worth eighty guineas. Absurd! I should send for a policeman and frighten it out of her; after all what do we know of the girl?"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed her brother; "you are mad, speak low—she will hear you. You are wrong. I would answer for the child with my life."

It was too late. Eunice had heard; she issued from the recess pallid and horrified. Mrs. Dundas signed imperatively to Austin—her threat had reached his ears—he sprang up and hastened to her.

"Mrs. Dundas," faltered Eunice, "you—you don't imagine I lost it on purpose—stole it?"

"No—no!" declared Roland Fanshawe; "she is excited, unnerved, she does not mean to hurt you."

"I don't care who I hurt," said Mrs. Dundas, with curious heat; "I'm going to send for a policeman and have everyone searched."

She put out a plump white hand and dropped it on her nephew's; he had lifted it involuntarily towards the pocket where he had concealed the vanished article. Mrs. Dundas gripped his arm.

"I feared so," she remarked; "Roland, you may deal with this miserable boy. He has my bracelet in his possession. I saw Nita Warwick give it to him—she is wearing diamonds only, and the glitter of the rubies puzzled me. This then, Austin, is what you were plotting—this is the stitch in time that was to save nine; this is the shadow that was to be cast on Miss Hamilton's character."

Roland Fanshawe had turned white and his jaw set. He held out an open palm mutely. Austin, his eyes lowered, drew out the bracelet, gave it up, and slunk away. Mrs. Dundas caught at the jewel, stepped to the bell, pressed the electric button, and moved to Nita Warwick, who had been a covert spectator of this little drama.

"Miss Warwick," she said, displaying the ornament, "I have taken the liberty of ordering your carriage; fortunately, I believe, you came alone, so I am spared consideration for some innocent guest of my brother's."

Nita stared at the golden circlet a second, rose, bowed stiffly, and, without a word, glided towards the door; Austin followed her, but she shot a disdainful glance at him.

"Bungler!" she hissed, and, shutting her fan with a click, passed out and was gone. Mrs. Dundas, with gentle fingers, was clasping the ruby bracelet upon the wrist of Eunice Hamilton.

"But I don't understand," murmured Eunice.

Sir Roland, with a grateful touch upon his sister's hand, answered the objection.

"It is not necessary that you should," he answered banteringly. He gained the side of his nephew and added, in a guarded tone.

"Yours was not the mind to conceive or the audacity to execute such a villainous trick. The reason for it I will not ask—it would be an insult to myself and others. I will speak to you later. Come, Miss Hamilton, we will resume our conversation." And he led her back into the alcove.

Nita Warwick's selfish vision had seen into the future clearly enough. Sir Roland did grow to believe that "it was destiny," that the second Eunice was meant to console him for the loss of the first. And Eunice found, when she was asked, that she shared the conviction.

Austin Carr disappeared from his club and the West End. The last news of him reported him to be ranching in California. He may or may not have been informed that at the wedding of Eunice Hamilton and Roland Fanshawe, one of the prettiest gifts was a ruby pendant. It was composed of the stones out of the famous bracelet, reset.

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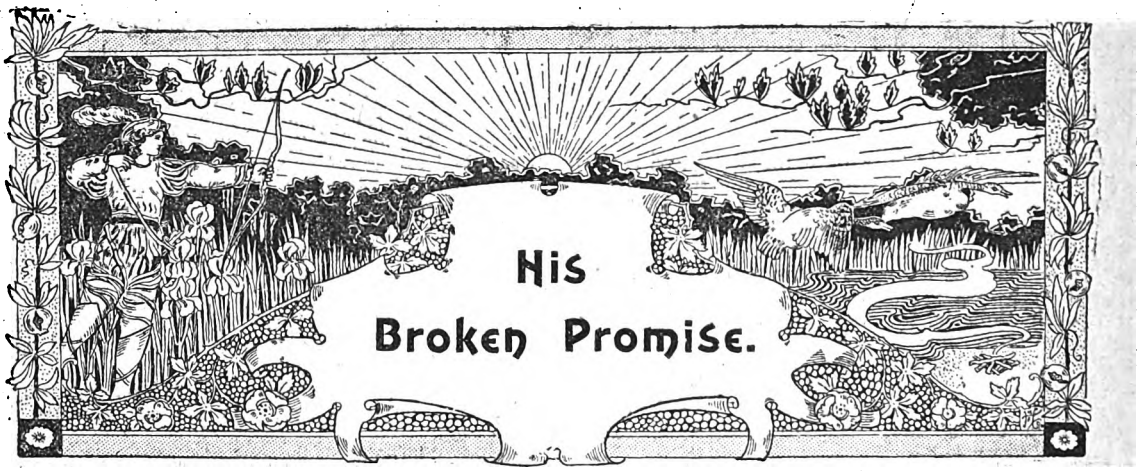

NEAR the close of a September day, as the sun in its dying splendour was tinting with rosy hues the dingy sails of a solitary fishing schooner, there floated from the weather-beaten rocks the words of a song. The singer had apparently forgotten that he was there at this picturesque trysting-place to meet the "dearest girl in the world," and, as though inspired by the panorama of gorgeous colourings of sky and ocean had begun singing:

Three fishers went sailing out into the west,
Out into the west when the sun went down——

The song abruptly ended as over the rocks climbed a girlish figure, who a moment later was clasped in the arms of the singer, Duncan Gray, but instead of the usual roguish smile a pale, frightened face looked up at him.

"Dora, you are ill!" he exclaimed in alarm.

"No," came the answer from the trembling lips, "it was my dream. All day I could not forget it. Such a dreadful dream."

"Why, dear, I did not think you would allow yourself to be so disturbed by a dream. But tell me about it."

"Oh, I thought I sat here on this very ledge, but alone, and the waves were pounding and beating against the rocks. Such dark, angry waves, and then——" she shivered with the memory, "then I saw you appear among those tossing foam-crested waves, and your face was as white as death. I cried out to you, but you did not hear me. I reached down, thinking to save you when a wave should sweep up nearer, when a mighty wave rolled up, whose spray left me drenched and blinded for a moment, and after it had receded I looked for you in vain and then found myself awake and shuddering with fear, the fear that it might be presentiment. Oh, can it mean that some danger awaits you?"

"You foolish little girl," he interrupted, attempting to allay her almost hysterical sobbing, "don't let your mind dwell upon such thoughts."

"But promise me you will be most careful and avoid all danger, for my sake."

"You may rest assured," he smilingly replied, "that suicide is at present the farthest from my intentions."

"Do not jest, but tell me you will in every way possible preserve yourself from danger. It was so real that you were lost to me! You will promise, won't you, please?" she pleaded.

"What is it I am to promise?" queried Duncan.

"That you will avoid any action that could result in disaster to you."

"Why, then, I promise; promise to do whatever lies within my power to divert any calamity that would for one moment grieve my little Dora."

"Oh, thank you!" she cried, clinging to him as though she were not quite sure that his promise had saved him from some inevitable peril.

* * * *

On a cold, grey morning, four months later, the wind began at an early hour to moan dismally along the rocky shore; by noon it had increased to a gale, accompanied by snow, and long before twilight a storm in all its fury was besieging the little fishing hamlet.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,
And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down;
They looked at the squall and they looked at the shower,
And the night rack came rolling up ragged and brown;
But men must work and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden and waters deep,
And the harbour bar be moaning——

Sang Dora as she finished her last domestic duties of the day.

"How glad I am that my Duncan is not one of the poor sailor boys to-night," she added to herself, as, before seating herself with her mother she ran and peered from the little window against which the snow was steadily beating.

Yes, there was Duncan, almost at the door—but who was with him? Dora hastened to admit them to the light; but only Duncan entered, calling to his companion, who was fast disappearing in the darkness, "Will be with you directly." Then to the astonished Dora he hastily explained: "A vessel on the point is signalling for help, and Joe is picking up men to go to her relief. Sorry I can't stay with you."

A terrible thought crosses her mind—her dream of not long ago—and quickly clasping her hands upon his arm she said, with face pale in its intensity: "You must not go."

"Not go!" was his astonished reply. "I should have supposed you would urge me to go to the relief of those who are in such distress."

"Duncan," she responded, in tones whose calmness was belied by the terror depicted in her face, "you must not go, for I know now it was of this that I dreamt."

"Dora, can you think of those suffering souls out there and permit such superstitions to bar me from rendering them assistance?"

"How can I let you go?" came from the quivering lips, "when I know you are going to your death?"

Firmly he unclasped the clinging fingers from his arm and with a hearty "Good-bye, Dora," his hand was upon the latch.

With a cry she attempted to spring between the door and him whose life she was striving to reclaim before it was too late. His strong arm caught her, held her for one moment, and then gently brushed her away. Suddenly a glad light—a light of hope—shone in her eyes.

"Your promise," she exclaimed, "your promise to me that you would not imperil your life—you surely remember, and that promise you will keep."

"My promise," he answered; "I do remember, but that promise I must break."

Like a statue carved in marble stood Dora, and in a voice of befitting coldness came the words: "Then Duncan Gray, I love you no more! I hate you!"

"Dora," he gasped as his face grew pale, "surely you are not conscious of what you say."

In the same cold, even tones came the response: "I retract not a word."

The door opened, letting in a great cloud of snow, which the shrieking wind was driving along in its fury, immediately closed, and Duncan passed on through the storm, half-dazed and hardly realising what had occurred.

The men who had been summoned were surprised at his delay, but there was no time to explain. Had there been a suspicion, however, in any mind, of his unwillingness to attend them on their perilous mission, such thought was instantly dispelled when it was noticed with what energy and daring he threw himself into the work of launching the life-saving boat, and the almost superhuman strength with which he handled the oars.

One boat load was brought to shore in safety, and it was necessary to return for those who still remained aboard the now fast-sinking ship. They had almost succeeded in launching her for the second trip, when a tremendous wave swept in, hurling boat and brave life-savers back on the beach to try all over again. In spite of the thunders of the storm old Joe swore to himself that he heard a groan from one of his companions with whom he was working so desperately.

"Well, I don't much blame yer for cavin' in," said he; "it's a terrible rough night."

"Bother the night," replied Duncan; "I sprained my wrist when that last big wave smashed us up so."

"Ho, men!" shouted Joe, "Might's well let up—Duncan's broke his arm. Have to let those other fellows out there go to Davy Jones' locker."

"Hold on," cried Duncan, "I have one arm left. Now then, shove her off. And though maddened with pain, he was again with them, fighting their way to those half-frozen, despairing victims of the wreck. They had secured the last man and were again making their way to shore when one oar suddenly stopped its brave work, and Duncan, unconscious from pain, fell, and from hoarse throats came the cry, "Man overboard!"

For a second only did despair possess those heroic hearts, then rescued turned rescuers. Those who were not too benumbed by their long exposure on the doomed vessel gave a hand, and after a severe battle with the waves Duncan's inanimate form was recovered, and the shore was gained where the exhausted ones were soon cared for.

Through the blinding storm a little muffled figure crept up to Joe and inquired in a voice which was half a moan: "Duncan—where is he?"

"'Spec' they carried him home," came the thoughtless response, as in wonderment he flashed his lantern into the face of the inquirer. For an instant he saw the white face with eyes dilated in the agony of comprehension of the dreadful truth, then, without a cry, without a sound, she fell at his feet in the drifted snow.

All that night lights burnt in one cottage home, where loving hands worked unceasingly to restore to consciousness him who had so nearly lost his own life in saving the lives of others, and when that long, dark night had vanished and with it the storm, leaving portions of a wreck scattered out on the shining sands, in the morning gleam as the tide went down, the tired eyes slowly opened and a look of recognition came into them, dispelling the terrible anxiety of those who had through the creeping hours watched for signs of returning life, and filling with hope the heart of the weary-eyed, forlorn little Dora, who dropped by the bedside with a cry of joy.

A troubled expression passed over his features, and with an effort he murmured: "My promise—I broke my promise—can you forgive me?"

"Oh, Duncan," she sobbed, "it is I that am to be forgiven."

A. T. Y.

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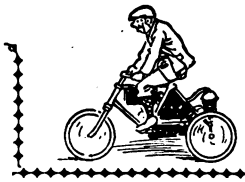

A Terrible Ride.

"HERE, Fitz, I wish you would serve this writ on Old Man Brown," said the Sheriff, just as he was starting for home at the close of business one day. "He may kick at first, but don't mind that. Just hold on, and he'll soon cool down. Go six miles east and eight south. Small, unpainted house, and big, red barn. You can't miss it. With your locomotive you ought to be back easily before dark."

The writ in question was notice of a judgment recently obtained from the county court against "Old Man Brown." Fitz took the paper with some little pride as representing his first independent mission, and with no suspicion of the possibilities involved in it. He had been in the bush but a short time, and a few days before this had been appointed deputy pro tem. to the Sheriff, who was his older brother. The "locomotive" was a motor-bicycle which he had brought with him from the West, and was the idol of his heart.

Now, "Old Man Brown" was a character. He owned a fine farm in a clearing, well stocked and well kept up. He had implicit confidence in the efficacy of lightning rods, and it was this belief that led more or less directly to the adventure we are now to tell.

Some months before a travelling peddler had convinced the old farmer that his barn required better protection, and had sold him some rods. By a familiar device the contract was so printed that by proper trimming a promissory note was left. This had been negotiated, and when time of payment came was held by an innocent purchaser who had no difficulty in securing upon it.

Brown was furious. He swore he never would pay the note, and, what was more, would kill any one who tried to serve notice of the judgment. This was the alarming situation into which Fitz was about to thrust himself unknowingly.

Fitz got to Brown's. He found him with his men busy threshing. He served the writ. The next moment he found himself flat on his back under the "old man," who was doing his best to throttle him. The "hands" gathered around to enjoy the sight, until one of the men evolved a brilliant idea, and exclaimed: "I tell you what, fellows! Let's tie him to his steam engine and start him home flying. We'll not hurt him, and if he should meet any accident between here and town it's not our fault."

The proposition was adopted with a hurrah. Before he fairly realised their intention the young man was bound firmly in the saddle, with an extra turn or two of rope about the upper tube of the diamond frame by way of additional security. His hands were placed on the handle bars and securely fastened there with cords about the wrists. Then each foot was tied firmly to one side of the "fork," and his bonds were complete. Thus trussed he was wheeled out to the road, escorted by an enthusiastic mob which included all the people of the place.

All being ready, the engine was started slowly, while two men, one on each side, supported the rider—first walking, then running, and finally letting him go with a tremendous shove. At the same instant the valve which controlled the supply of petrol was opened wide, and the machine set out at a lively pace on its journey. The impulse of the final shove had taken Fitz out into the surrounding open country, away from the travelled road. There were slight inequalities in the hard soil, and numerous tree stumps helped to make bicycle riding anything but easy, especially at high speed.

In a very few minutes Fitz had received such a shaking up as he had not imagined possible on such a conveyance. His teeth chattered and his head began to ache, as well as his back. To make matters worse it was growing dark. Unless he could be stopped in some way there was no prospect that the petrol would become exhausted and the machine stop of its own accord in much less than two hours.

After the first few minutes he had lost entirely the sense of direction, and could not be sure even of where the road lay. All he could do was to keep his balance, steer clear of serious obstructions, and trust to fortune to bring him out of the scrape. He had little hope of help from any one he might meet or overtake, for with the best intentions in the world one would find it hard to help a man flying across wild, open country, at fifteen miles an hour.

At last he came to a road, and turned into it at the imminent risk of capsizing. Like many roads through the bush, this had been made only by use—that is, no roadway had been built, but its course over the surface of the bush had been fixed by common consent and a common direction. By the repeated passing of waggons, always drawn by two horses, the wheel-tracks had been worn into deep ruts, leaving between them a ridge a foot and a half or two feet wide and of the same height as the level of the ground outside. A common bicycle would have fared badly in one of these ruts, because its pedals would have been constantly striking one side or the other, and would have been bent or broken. Fitz, however, had had pedals and cranks removed from his motor machine, and had he been free to manage it as usual he would have had little or no trouble in guiding it in the rut. Now, however, cramped by his position and unnerved by the shaking up he had received, and bothered furthermore by the darkness which prevented his seeing the road clearly, he had little control over his wheel.

As a consequence it "wobbled," striking now one side and then the other of the narrow rut with a horrible, grinding, tearing sound. Suddenly the ground seemed to give way beneath him, and, with a sensation like that felt in a rapidly descending lift, Fitz found himself plunging downward into some dark abyss. Then came a rush and a splash, and the machine was tearing uphill instead of down. Nothing had happened, after all, except the road just there forded one of the deep narrow creeks which abound in the bush. One more element, however, had been added to the rider's discomfort, for though the water was not deep, he had been thoroughly drenched by the splashing as he dashed through, and in the cold night air he soon became chilled to the bone.

Occasionally a solitary farmhouse was passed, and a little later he dashed into and through a small village. Then he skirted a barbed wire fence that tore his clothes

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and skinned his right side. Then came a very uneven piece of ground, anew testing his ability to maintain his equilibrium. But now, from cold, weariness, and nervous strain, Fitz was hardly conscious. Almost automatically he kept his balance, but as to direction, he could only let the machine have its own way. Often he imagined the speed slackening, but as often found that this was due to an up-grade, and that when the summit was reached a new burst of speed followed.

Very fortunately, no more fences or creeks had been met, but now a dangerous spot was near, and the bicycle in its mad career was fast approaching it. These so-called creeks are small streams that wind their way across the bush, into which they cut deep channels. One had been passed already, and at a point where the road dipped down into it, and made the passage comparatively easy. Now another was just in front, and the bicycle was approaching it where the bank was sheer. Fitz saw the danger when it was too late, and, attempting to turn aside on the very brink of the dark chasm, he only succeeded in plunging into it diagonally instead of at right angles. There was a dizzy sensation of falling, a violent shock, a blinding flash, and the hot breath of flame, —and then unconsciousness.

When he came to himself again, it was growing light. It seemed to him that every joint was aching and every nerve tingling with a separate pain of its own. He was half-lying, half-sitting in the water, which almost wholly covered his body. The violence of the fall had wrenched one hand free from its bonds, but at the same time had sprained the wrist, which now was badly swollen and discoloured.

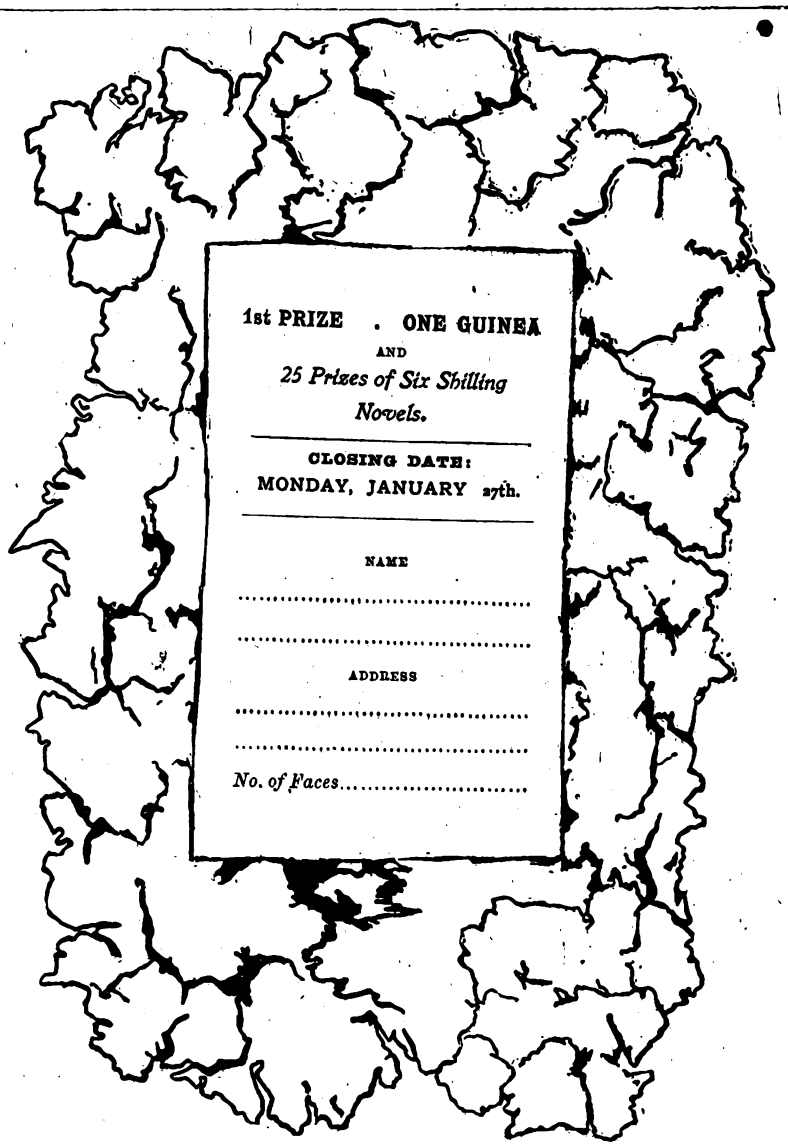
With infinite difficulty and much suffering, he succeeded in drawing his knife from his pocket, and with it cutting the cords that bound his feet, and held him in the saddle. Even then it was some time before he could rise and stand, or even straighten out his aching limbs.

Then he surveyed himself, and a piteous spectacle he saw! Clothing was torn, scorched, and saturated with muddy water; hair and moustache were singed: flesh torn by the barbed wire, and burnt and blistered by the explosion; and every joint chilled and numb from the long immersion in the water. After a time he found a place where he could climb to the top of the high bank, and fortunately saw a hut not far away. Thither he struggled, and there spent many days in recovering from the injuries and nervous shock.

"Old Man Brown" finally had to pay the judgment and so Fitz's first official errand was not in vain.

SAM STYLE.

Facemaking Puzzle.



The design above contains a number of faces from which the eyes have been omitted. What you have to do is to put dots for eyes in the right positions, so as to make the greatest possible number of faces.

The eyes must be marked in ink, and the total number of faces made must be put in the space provided for that purpose.

The first prize will be awarded to the competitor who makes the greatest number of faces. In the event of a tie the prize will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor. Cut out the design round the line inclosing it, and post to the Face-making Editor, SHORT STORIES, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., to arrive by first post on Monday, January 27th.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

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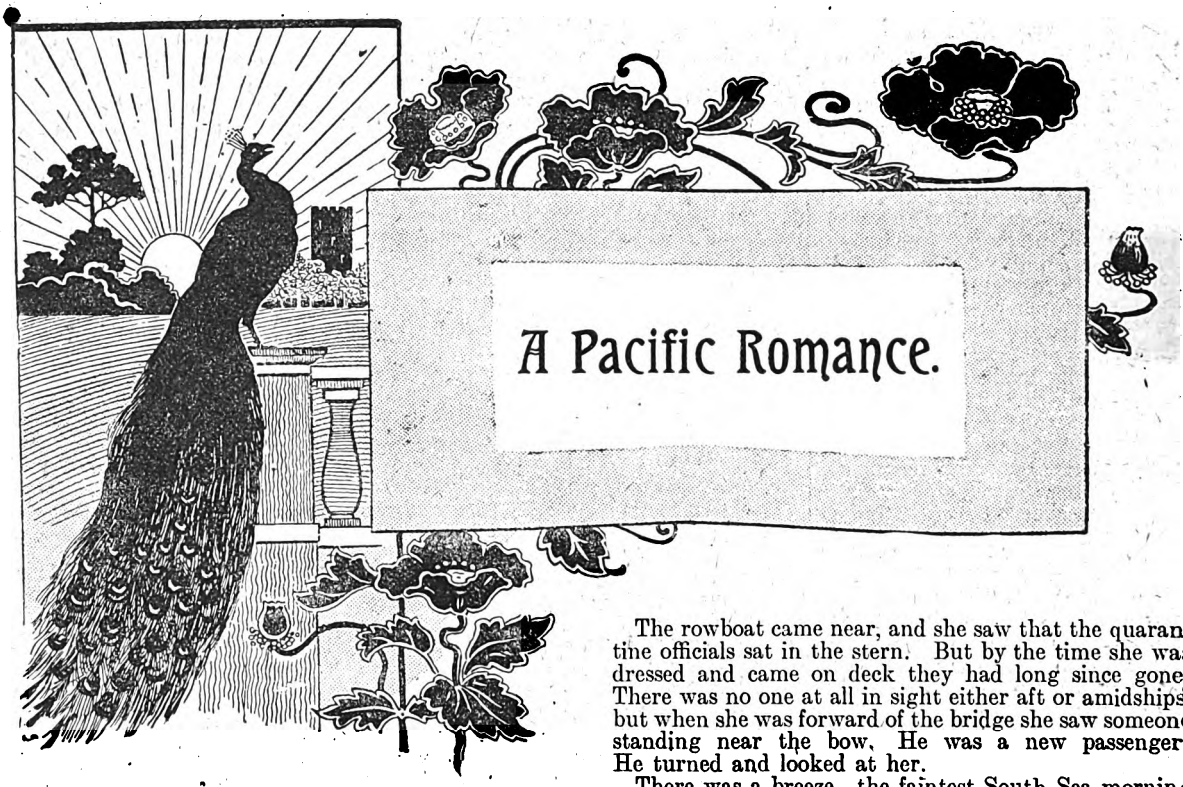

A Pacific Romance.

By all the laws of the true romance she should have felt upon opening her eyes a premonition that this was to be a day of destiny. But she merely felt that the engines had stopped, that the ship was at anchor, and that, therefore, it was moistly, insufferably warm. The curtains across the state-room windows did not so much as move. She came down from her berth and pulled them aside. The coast of Guatemala was before her—and the port of San José.

There had been rain in the night, a tropical shower. The clouds were lifting away. They were massed in white and gold behind the two volcano peaks that had sent forth the one fire, the other water, in their time. And the peaks themselves were side by side, two cones of glowing pink.

They were miles inland, many miles, and the thick, luxuriant tropical green was between, reaching to the curve of the sand. There were some white houses by the beach—white, with red tiles. They made the port of San José. But the ship was anchored well out in deep water, and there were no craft in sight, save a rowboat or two drawn up on the sand, and one that was starting out from the pier across the faint blue water that showed back the clouds of white and gold. The wake and the oars glistened in the new sunlight.

The girl leant her bare arm on the sill and stood looking out. She had seen many beautiful things in her life, but never any so lovely as the coast and volcano peaks of San José de Guatemala at the break of day.

The rowboat came near, and she saw that the quarantine officials sat in the stern. But by the time she was dressed and came on deck they had long since gone. There was no one at all in sight either aft or amidships, but when she was forward of the bridge she saw someone standing near the bow. He was a new passenger. He turned and looked at her.

There was a breeze—the faintest South Sea morning breeze—that rippled her thin white gown and moved the loose tendrils of her hair. He raised his straw hat civilly and turned back to his consideration of the shore. Presently the purser joined him, and he stood talking, his hands jammed into his coat pockets, and his tan-shod feet wide apart on the deck. Then he went into the saloon.

That was all Miss Strathmore saw of nim, but she described him to her mother accurately, nevertheless.

"He's the only foreigner I ever saw who looked as though he could do things—and not talk about it afterwards. His skin is very white and his hair is black. His nose is big and his jaw shuts hard. And, moreover—though his eyes are brown, they are neither sparkling nor soft"—she objected to both—"they are level and hard. That he may speak English is my fondest wish."

He did. He was put beside her at breakfast, and the captain presented him. His name was Merida.

"You saw me this morning," he said, "when I was looking back upon 'my house, my home, my heritage, my lands.'"

"And 'the laughing dames in whom you did delight?'" she followed it up.

He gave her a quick look. "Perhaps," he said, and abruptly turned to talk to the man at the other side, a little Chilian whom Miss Strathmore did not like. They talked Spanish together, and she could not understand. So she ate her breakfast and wondered why the Guatemalan should have objected to having his quotation finished out. Had she hit some nail too neatly on the head? He had risked that. But he knew his Byron, apparently, and his English had not

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so much as an accent. If there was to be any further conversation, it lay with him to begin it. He did so presently, but he kept to generalities, and refused to be drawn out about himself.

The captain was more communicative on the subject later on. He belonged to the general seadog type.

"Better make up to young Merida, Miss Elizabeth," he advised, coming to a stop in front of her deck chair; "he owns about everything in sight over there," his arm swept the view of dense green from the beach curve to the mountains far away. "Half Guatemala belongs to his brother and him. The brother is married—to a Spanish princess, too—but he's not, and you'll do the best two weeks' work you ever did in your life if you catch him between here and 'Frisco Bay."

The captain liked the topic, evidently. He drew up a stool and sat down to pursue it further, going from the jocose to the serious.

He could recommend Matcho Merida. He wasn't like the rest of these Black and Tans.

"He's made this trip with me six times now, and I've watched him close. He doesn't go in for the things that most of his breed do—cards and women and wine." (Miss Strathmore thought of her quotation.) "We get the chance to see things on these ships, you may be sure, but I've never seen Merida do a silly thing yet. It may be because he's been to school in England, and runs the New-York end of affairs, but whatever the reason is, it's so. And educated!" he added, awe-inspiredly, "why, that fellow speaks four languages as well as he does his own—and got something to say in all of them. You take heed of what I say, Miss Elizabeth. I knew your father when I was a boy, and the best I could wish for his daughter would be to marry young Merida." He stood up and started off. "Here he comes now. Get him to tell you how he and the other young bloods held the Governor's palace against a revolutionist mob for a day and a night. Make up to him."

Which—the advice and the strategy—had the natural effect of rendering Miss Strathmore more than barely civil to Merida when he stopped to speak to her. He had changed the suit in which he had come on board, and was in white flannels now.

"He's not handsome," she decided, remembering the regular features of other Spanish blooded men she had known, "but he's quite the smartest individual I ever saw."

He pulled up a wicker chair beside her, and they began to talk. It was ten o'clock then. They were still talking when the luncheon gong sounded at one. They went down together, and talked through the meal.

If Miss Strathmore had been stupid she would have stayed on deck the rest of the afternoon. As it was she went to the cabin for a nap, and then devoted herself—the least in the world, obviously—to her mother, until dinner-time. But there was the evening after that. They spent it together in the bow and talked—of the phosphorescence of the water and things.

It was not until after a good many nights that they got to anything much more personal. Then it came all at once. Merida stood wedged into the extreme point of the bow, and Miss Strathmore sat half-over-hanging the black ocean when the prow cut into gold light. She was holding fast to a stay. She could just see Merida's face in the starlight, and his eyes were on her steadily.

There had been a stop in speech.

"Was I uncivil when you finished my line for me, that night?" he asked.

"Rather," Miss Strathmore answered him.

"And you didn't know why, I suppose?"

She admitted that she did not.

"Well," he explained, "it's just this. I get so sick of having people go on the basis that all men down here are Don Juans, and all that. We get far too much of it."

She reminded him that he had laid himself open to it.

"I know I did. But one doesn't expect an American or an Englishman to know his poets—if you don't mind my saying so. I never thought about your going on." There was a pause. "And I don't go in for women and flirtations," Merida said. "I have never cared for any girl except you."

It was sudden, certainly—so sudden that she let go her hold on the stay. His hand went out to steady her instantly. Then he took it away.

"I suppose you are surprised," he said. "I am myself. But it's true."

Miss Strathmore's self-possession had weathered many experiences, but foundered at this. She could not think of anything to say.

"I don't want to bother," he told her, "and I don't expect you to like me yet—but I hope you will—before long." Then he went off to other things, but conversation was not a success.

They were at anchor off Mazatlan the next day, some two miles out beyond the bar. Merida put in his appearance at breakfast in shore clothes.

"I'm going to land," he told Miss Strathmore, "if the captain will have a boat whistled for me."

"It's rough," she tried to suggest.

"I know it is," he answered, levelling his eyes straight on her for the benefit of all who might choose to see, so that she flushed very pink. "If it were not I should ask you and your mother to go, too." They had done it at Acapulco and Manzanillo before.

"I will not go," observed the Chilian; "it is too much danger to."

Merida caught Miss Strathmore's glance of contempt and nearly smiled.

Towards the middle of the morning a rowboat, whose owners were courageous, responded to the signals and ventured out to the ship. Merida went down the ladder. The captain watched him.

"You'll come to grief, Matcho, if you don't look out. See that your men aren't drunk when you start back. It's pretty bad now, but it'll be rolling like fun then. We hoist anchor at three," he added, warningly.

Merida watched his chance to jump. He caught it expertly, and the boat pulled away.

It was two o'clock when it reappeared, coming slowly, hidden in a hollow, climbing a crest, flung about through the frothing bar. Miss Strathmore and the captain and a good many others were watching it. Miss Strathmore had been shooting at driftwood and at a big turtle that was floating on its back in the sun. The captain had been watching her. The turtle was a shifting and difficult mark, but she had hit it three times, and then a boat had put out to bring it in.

"We'll have turtle steaks to-morrow," said the captain; "you're a pretty good shot."

But she had had enough of the amusement, and they were leaning idly against the rail. The captain reverted to Merida.

"Did Matcho tell you about the palace?" he asked.

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"He won't," she answered; "he says he's forgotten it."

"He isn't a great talker. Hasn't told you about the girl down below on the spardeck, either, I suppose?"

She shook her head.

"Well," said the captain, "she's a little Indian from one of his plantations down there—pretty little thing, too. It seems she's in love with him and he won't look at her. So what does she go and do but scrape the money together somehow and take steerage passage and follow him. She came on at San José, but he never knew she was aboard until after we got off the Guatemalan coast. She's a shy one—and sharp. Then one day when he was down with the doctor looking at the hospital she showed herself, clasped his knees and wept, and all the rest of it—made the dickens of a row. He acted very well, but it put him in a ticklish kind of place. Of course we won't let her up here, and he's particularly careful to keep off the spardeck now. He's going to ship her back from 'Frisco, he says." He pointed to the back of a black-haired head that appeared over the side directly below them. "That's her." Evidently the eyes in the head were watching the boat too."

"She's seen you with him, and she doesn't like you a little bit," the captain chuckled. "She calls you names."

Miss Strathmore did not think it amusing at all. The rowboat was near. Miss Strathmore met Merida's eye.

"He'll have a scramble of it getting up," the captain opined.

The ship was rolling heavily.

"And his Mexicans," said the captain, uneasily; "by Heaven, they're half-drunk, too. Look at their eyes."

Whether it was that or not, it was certain that they could not seem to manage to keep the boat alongside long enough for Merida to catch the platform, when the ship rolled down.

"Take your time, Merida," the chief engineer called to him—"take your time."

Apparently the word suggested something to Merida. He put his hand to his watch-pocket—and then his face changed. There were three Mexicans in the boat, but only two of them had rowed; the other had been sitting near him in the stern, steering occasionally with an oar. Merida said something to this one. The fellow looked too innocent and shook his head. Things happened quickly after that. Merida caught the man by the arm, and that began the fight. The rowers shipped their oars, and, urged by the excitement and the tequilla, which they had drunk, joined in. The boat pitched and plunged.

"They'll kill him," the captain called out. "Lower away a boat."

"If they've no knives"—began the purser. But as he said it a knife was thrown, and by the little Indian girl on the deck below.

The captain swore one oath. "They'll do him now—certain," he said.

Merida had his man by the throat, but he was down, and all three were atop of him. One of them jumped up and caught the knife by the handle as it came, dexterously. He gave it to the man who had Merida under him, and the other two drew back. A splendid brown arm, with its hand grasping the knife, rose high and poised above Merida's breast. Then it fell—but uselessly, limp from the shoulder-bone. There was smoke in the muzzle of the revolver in Miss Strathmore's hand.

Merida threw the wounded Mexican off, bent over him, felt in his sash, and drew out his own watch. The rowers had resumed their oars.

"Now," said Merida, quietly, "you take me alongside."

The little Indian on the spardeck had watched it eagerly, hanging out far over the side. She turned now, twisting around lithely upon her back, her face upturned. Her dark eyes glowed, her lips apart. Miss Strathmore, the revolver still in her hand, was straight above. The Indian threw back her head further still, and then laughed. Her right hand went to her forehead, and came away again with a sweep, in mock salute—the salute of the matador who has missed his stroke and forsakes the ring.

A. W. N.

RESULT OF THE "BRAIN GYMNASIUM," Nos. 1—6.

THE first prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mrs. E. Robinson, of 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E., whose attempt was the first correct one dealt with.

Pencil-cases have been sent to:

H. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
J. J. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
Miss M. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
J. S. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Mrs. E. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Mrs. Ayers, 86 Birkbeck Road, Leytonstone.
A. W. Chapman, 132 Effra Road, Wimbledon.
Miss M. Edmondson, 75 Waterloo Road, Burnley.
W. J. Baxter, 38 Douglas Street, Cork, Ireland.
A. Beech, 123 Victoria Road, Dundee.

Solutions:

1. O rinoco
   R ichmond
   I sabella
   O ven
   L ady Jane Grey
   E lizabeth

2. "Christmas with your clan;
   Easter—where you can!"
   Italy. Christmas. Mistletoe. Snow. Easter. Yule. Cheer Churl. Win. A.

3.
C	I	R	C	E
I	D	I	O	M
R	I	F	L	E
C	O	L	O	N
E	M	E	N	D

4. Scott. Byron. Watts. Shakespeare. Longfellow. Gray. Cowper
5. Burden.
6. Marabou—t
   Coco— a
   Ewe— r
   Fir— e

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

SUMMARY.

ANDREA DE MANCINI, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his château. Yvonne, however, is not at all gracious to de Luynes, because she knows of the duel which he fought with her brother, as she and her sister Geneviève were the two ladies who befriended him. De Mancini falls in love with Geneviève.

De Luynes does not stay at the Château de Canaples, but at an inn in Blois, the *Lys de France*. One morning he is visited there by the Marquis de St. Auban, who himself wants to marry Yvonne—for her money. After insulting each other a duel is arranged for the following morning, but the time is afterwards altered to the evening of the day of the insult. St. Auban tells de Luynes that Cardinal Mazarin has issued a warrant for his arrest.

As de Luynes is riding to Canaples after his encounter with St. Auban, he is met by Malpertuis, an officer who had been in the train of St. Auban, and by him he is told that a plot is on foot to kidnap Yvonne. De Luynes warns the lady, but she takes no heed and falls into the trap set for her. De Luynes starts out to her assistance.

CHAPTER XII.

The Rescue.

SOME precious moments did I waste standing with that green rag betwixt my fingers, and I grew sick and numb in body and in mind. She was gone—carried off by a man I had reason to believe she hated, and whom God send she might have no motive to hate more deeply hereafter.

The ugly thought swelled until it blotted out all others, and in its train there came a fury upon me that drove me to do by instinct that which earlier I should have done by reason. I climbed back into the saddle, and away across the meadow I went, journeying at an angle with the road, my horse's head turned in the direction of Blois. That road at last was gained, and on I thundered at a stretched gallop, praying that my hard-used beast might last until the town was reached.

Now, as I have already said, I am not a man who falls easily a prey to excitement. It may have beset me in the heat of battle, when the fearsome lust of blood and death makes every man a raving maniac, thrilled with mad joy at every stab he deals, and laughing with fierce passion at every blow he takes, though in the taking of it his course be run. But saving at such wild times, never until then could I recall having been so little master of myself. There was a fever in me; all hell was in my blood; and, stranger still, and hitherto unknown at any season, there was a sickly fear that mastered me, and drew out great beads of sweat upon my brow. Fear for myself I have never known, for at no time has life so pampered me that the thought of parting company with it concerned me greatly. Fear for another I had not known till then, saving perchance the uneasiness at times that I had felt touching Andrea, because never yet had I sufficiently cared——

Thus far my thoughts took me, as I rode, and where I have halted did they halt, and stupidly I went over their ground again, like one who gropes for something in the dark.

Because never yet had I sufficiently cared. I had never cared——

And then, Ah, Heaven! As I turned the thought over I understood, and understanding, I pursued the sentence where I had left off.

But caring at last, I was sick with fear of what might befall the one I cared for. There lay the reason of the frenzied excitement whereof I was become the slave. That it was that had brought the moisture to my brow and curses to my lips; that it was that had caused me to instinctively thrust the rag of green velvet within my doublet.

Heavens! It was strange—aye, monstrous strange—and a right good jest for Fate to laugh at, that I, Gaston de Luynes, vile ruffler and worthless bravo, should have come to such a pass; I, whose forefinger had for the past ten years uptilted the chin of every tavern wench I had chanced upon; I, whose lips had never known the touch of other than the lips of these; I, who had thought my heart long dead to tenderness and devotion, or to any fondness save the animal one for my ignoble self. Yet there I rode as if the devil had me for a quarry, panting, swearing, reviling, and well-nigh sobbing with rage at a fear that I might come too late, all because of a proud lady who knew me for what I was, and held me in contempt because of her knowledge, all for a lady who had not the kindness for me that one might spare a dog, who looked on me as something not good to see.

Since there was no one to whom I might tell my story that they might mock me, I mocked myself, with a laugh that startled passers-by, and which, coupled with the crazy pace at which I dashed into Blois, caused them, I doubt not, to think me mad. Nor were they wrong; for mad, indeed, I deemed myself.

That I trampled no one under foot in my furious progress through the streets is a miracle that passes my understanding.

In the courtyard of the *Lys de France* I drew rein at last, with a tug that brought my shuddering brute on to his

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haunches, and sent those who stood about, flying into the shelter of the doorways.

"Another horse," I shouted as I sprang to the ground. "Another horse at once."

Then, as I turned to inquire for Michelot, I espied him leaning stolidly against the gateway.

"How long have you been there, Michelot?" I asked.

"Half-an-hour, mayhap."

"Saw you a closed carriage pass?"

"Ten minutes ago I saw one go by, followed by M. de St. Auban and a gentleman who greatly resembled M. de Vilmorin, besides an escort of four of the most villainous knaves——"

"That is the one," I broke in. "Quick, Michelot. Arm yourself and get your horse. I have need of you. Come knave, move yourself."

St. Auban bore down on me, but the glittering point of my rapier drove him back again.

At the end of a few minutes we set out at a sharp trot, leaving the curious ones, whom my loud-voiced commands had assembled, to speculate on the meaning of so much bustle. Once clear of the township we gave the reins to our horses, and our trot became a gallop as we travelled along the road to Meung, with the Loire on our right. And as we went I briefly told Michelot what was afoot, interlarding my explanations with prayers that we might come upon the kidnappers before they crossed the river, and curses at the flying pace of our mounts, which to my anxious mind seemed slow.

At about a mile from Blois the road runs over an undulation of the ground that is almost a hill. From the moment that I left Canables, as the Angelus was ringing, until the moment when our panting horses gained the brow of that little eminence, but half-an-hour had sped. Still, in that half-hour the tints had all but faded from the sky, and the twilight shadows grew thicker around us with every moment. Yet not so thick were they become but that I could see a coach at a standstill in the hollow, some three hundred yards beneath us, and, by that, half-a-dozen horses, of which four were riderless and held by the two men who were still mounted. Then, breathlessly scanning the field betwixt the road and the river, I espied five persons half-way across, and at a like distance from the water as we were from the coach. Two men, whom I supposed to be St. Auban and Vilmorin, were forcing along a woman, whose struggles, feeble though they appeared, yet retarded their progress in some measure. Behind them walked two others, musket on shoulder.

I pointed them out to Michelot with a soft cry of joy. We were in time.

Following with my eyes the course they appeared to be pursuing, I saw, by the bank, a boat, in which two men were waiting. Again I pointed, this time to the boat.

"Over the hedge, Michelot," I cried; "we must ride in a straight line for the water, and so intercept them. Follow me."

Over the hedge we went, and down the gentle slope at as round a pace as the soft ground would, with safety, allow. I had reckoned upon being opposed by six, or even eight men, whereas there were but four, one of whom I knew was hardly to be reckoned. Doubtless St. Auban had imagined himself safe from pursuit, when he left two of his bravos with the horses, probably to take them on to Meung, and there cross with them and rejoin him. Two more, I doubted not, were those seated at the oars.

I laughed to myself as I took in all this; but even as I laughed, those in the field stood still, and sent up a shout that told me we had been perceived.

"On, Michelot, on!" I shouted, spurring my horse forward. Then, in answer to their master's call, the two ruffians who had been doing duty as grooms, came pounding into the field.

"Ride to meet them, Michelot," I cried. Obediently he wheeled to the left, and I caught the swish of his sword as it left the scabbard.

St. Auban was now hurrying towards the river with his party. Already they were but fifty yards from the boat, and a hundred still lay 'twixt him and me. Furiously I pressed onward, and presently but half the distance separated us, whilst they were still some thirty yards from their goal.

Then his two bravos faced round to meet me, and one, standing some fifty paces in advance of the other, levelled his musket and fired. But, in his haste, he aimed too high; the bullet carried away my hat, and before the smoke had cleared, I was upon him. I had drawn a pistol from my holster, but it was not needed; my horse passed over him before he could save himself from my fearful charge.

In the fast fading light, a second musket barrel shone, and I saw the second ruffian taking aim at me, with not a dozen yards betwixt us. With the old soldier's instinct I wrenched at the reins till I brought my horse on to his haunches. It was high time; for simultaneously with my action, the fellow blazed at me, and the scream of pain that broke from my steed told me that the poor brute had taken the bullet. With a bound that carried me forward some six paces, the animal sank, quivering, to the ground. I disengaged my feet from the stirrups as he fell, but the shock of it sent me rolling on the ground, and the ruffian, seeing me fallen,

sprang forward, swinging his musket up above his head. I dodged the murderous, downward stroke, and as the stock buried itself close beside me, in the soft earth, I rose on one knee, and with a grim laugh, I raised my pistol. I brought the muzzle within a hand's breadth of his face, then fired, and shot him through the head. Perchance you'll say 'twas a murderous, cruel stroke. Mayhap it was; but at such seasons men stay not to unravel niceties, but strike, ere they themselves be stricken.

Leaping over the twitching body, I got out my sword and sprang after St. Auban, who, with Vilmorin and Yvonne—careless of what might betide his followers—was now within ten paces of the boat.

Pistol shots cracked behind me, and I wondered how Michelot was faring, but dared not pause to look.

The twain in the boat stood up, wielding their great oars, and methought them on the point of coming to their master's aid, in which case my battle had truly been a lost one. But that craven Vilmorin did me good service then, for with a cry of fear at my approach, he abandoned his hold of Yvonne, whose struggles were keeping both the men back; thus freed, he fled towards the boat, and jumping in, he shouted to the men in his shrill, quavering voice, to put off. Albeit they disobeyed him contemptuously and waited for the Marquis, still, they no longer left the boat, fearing, no doubt, that if they did so, the coward would put off alone.

As for St. Auban, Vilmorin's flight left him unequal to the task of dragging the girl along. She dug her heels into the ground, and tug as he might, for all that he set both hands to work, he could not move her. In this plight I came upon him, and challenged him to stand and face me.

With a bunch of oaths he got out his sword, but in doing so he was forced to remove one of his hands from the girl's arm. Seizing the opportunity with a ready wit and courage seldom found in women of her quality, she twisted herself from the grip of his left hand, and came staggering towards me for protection, holding up her pinioned wrists. With my blade I severed the cord, whereupon she plucked the gag from her mouth, and sank against my side, her struggles having left her weak indeed.

As I set my arm about her waist to support her, my heart seemed to swell within me, and strange melodies shaped themselves within my soul.

St. Auban bore down upon me with a fearful oath, but the glittering point of my rapier danced before his eyes, and drove him back again.

"To me, Vilmorin, you cowardly cur!" he shouted. "To me, you dogs!"

He let fly at them a volley of blood-curdling oaths, then, without waiting to see if they obeyed him, he came at me again, and our swords met.

"Courage, Mademoiselle," I whispered, as a sigh that was almost a groan escaped her. "Have no fear."

But that fight was not destined to be fought, for, as again we engaged, there came the fall of running feet behind me. It flashed across my mind that Michelot had been worsted, and that my back was about to be assailed. But in St. Auban's face I saw, as in a mirror, that he who came was Michelot.

"Steady there!" snarled the Marquis, springing back beyond my reach. "What can a man do with naught but fools and poltroons to serve him? Faugh! We will continue our swordplay at St. Sulpice des Reaux to-night. Au revoir, M. de Luynes."

Turning, he sheathed his sword, and running down to the river, bounded into the boat, where I heard him reviling Vilmorin with every foul name he could call to mind.

My blood was aflame, and I was not minded to wait for our meeting at Reaux. Consigning Mademoiselle to the care of Michelet, who stood panting and bleeding from a wound in his shoulder, I turned back to my dead horse, and plucking the remaining pistol from the holster, I ran down to the very edge of the water. The boat was not ten yards from shore, and my action had been unheeded by St Auban, who was standing in the stern.

Kneeling, I took careful aim at him, and as God lives, I would have saved much of the trouble that was to follow had I been allowed to fire. But at that moment a hand was laid upon my arm, and Yvonne's sweet voice murmured in my ear, "You have fought a brave and gallant fight, M. de Luynes, and you have done a deed of which the knights of old might have been proud. Do not mar it by an act of murder."

"Murder, Mademoiselle?" I gasped, letting my hand fall. "Surely there is no murder in this?"

"A suspicion of it, I think, and so brave a man should have clean hands."

CHAPTER XIII.
The Hand of Yvonne.

We did not long remain upon the field of battle. Indeed, if we lingered at all, it was but so that Mademoiselle might bandage Michelot's wound. And while he did so, my stout henchman related to us how it had fared with him; how having taken the two ruffians separately, he had been wounded by the first, whom he repaid by splitting his skull, whereupon the second one had discharged his pistol without effect, then made off towards the road, while Michelot, remembering that I might need assistance, had let him go.

"There, good Michelot," quoth Mademoiselle, completing her task, "I have done what little I can. And now, M. de Luynes, let us go."

It was close upon seven o'clock, and night was at hand. Already the moon was showing her large, full face above the tree tops by Chambord, and casting a silver streak athwart the stream. The plash of oars from the Marquis' boat was waxing indistinct, despite the stillness, whilst by the eye the boat itself was no longer to be distinguished.

As I turned, my glance fell upon the bravo whom I had shot. He lay stiff and stark upon his back, his sightless eyes wide open and staring heavenwards, his face all blood smeared and ghastly to behold.

Mademoiselle shuddered. "Let us go," she repeated, in a faint whisper. Her eye had also fallen upon that thing, and her voice was full of awe. She laid her hand upon my sleeve, and, 'neath the suasion of her touch I moved away.

To our surprise and joy we found St. Auban's coach where we had left it, with two saddled horses tethered close by. The others had doubtless been taken by the coachman and the bravo who had escaped Michelot, both of whom had fled. These animals we looked upon as the spoils of war, and, accordingly, when we set out in the coach—Mademoiselle having desired me to ride beside her therein, Michelot wielding the reins, it was with those two horses tethered behind.

"Monsieur de Luynes," said my companion softly, "I fear that I have done you a great injustice. Indeed I know not how to crave your forgiveness, how to thank you, or how to hide my shame at those words I spoke to you this afternoon at Canaples."

"Not another word on that score, Mademoiselle."

And to myself I thought of what recompense already had been mine. To me it had been given to have her lean trustingly upon me, my arm about her waist, whilst sword in hand I had fought for her. Heavens! Was that not something to have lived for—aye, and to have died for—methought.

"I deserved, Monsieur," she continued presently, "that you should have left me to my fate for all the odious things I uttered when you warned me of my peril, and for the manner in which I have treated you since your coming to Blois."

"You have but treated me, Mademoiselle, in the only manner in which you could treat one so far beneath you, one who is utterly unworthy that you should bestow a single regret upon him."

"You are strangely humble to-night, Monsieur. It is unwonted in you, and for once you wrong yourself. You have not said that I am forgiven."

"I have naught to forgive."

"Alas! you have—indeed you have."

"Well then!" quoth I, with a return of my old tone of banter, "I forgive."

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Thereafter we travelled on in silence for some little while, my heart full of joy at being so near to her, and the friendliness which she evinced for me, and my mind casting o'er my joyous heart a cloud of some indefinable evil presage.

"You are a brave man, M. de Luynes," she murmured presently, "and I have been taught that brave men are ever honourable and true."

"Had they who taught you that known Gaston de Luynes, they would have told you instead that it is possible for a vile man to have the one redeeming virtue of courage, even as it is possible for a liar to have a countenance that is sweet and innocent."

"There speaks that humble mood you are affecting, and which sits upon you as my father's clothes might do. Nay, Monsieur, I shall hold to my first teaching, and be deaf to yours."

Again there was a spell of silence. At last—

"I have been thinking, Monsieur," she said, "of that other occasion on which you rode with me. I remember that you said you had killed a man, and when I asked you why, you said that you had done it because he sought to kill *you*. Was that the truth?"

"Assuredly, Mademoiselle. We fought a duel, and it is customary in a duel for each to seek to kill the other."

"But why was this duel fought?" she cried, with some petulance.

"I fear me, Mademoiselle, that I may not answer you," I said, recalling the exact motives, and thinking of how futile appeared the quarrel which Eugène de Canaples had sought with Andrea, when viewed in the light of what had since befallen.

"Was the quarrel of your seeking?"

"In a measure it was, Mademoiselle."

"In a measure?" she echoed. Then persisting, as women will, "Will you not tell me what this measure was?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle," I answered in despair, "I will tell you just so much as I may. Your brother had occasion to be opposed to certain projects that were being formed in Paris by persons high in power around a beardless boy. Himself of too small importance to dare wage war against those powerful ones who would have crushed him, your brother sought to gain his ends by sending a challenge to this boy. The lad was high-spirited, and consented to meet M. de Canaples, by whom he would assuredly have been murdered —'tis the only word, Mademoiselle—had I not intervened as I did."

She was silent for a moment, then—

"It grieves me to disturb you, but I have a warrant for your arrest."

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"I believe you, Monsieur," she said simply. "You thought then to shield another—but why?"

"For three reasons, Mademoiselle. Firstly, those persons high in power chose to think it my fault that the quarrel had arisen, and threatened to hang me if the duel took place and the boy were harmed. Secondly, I myself felt a kindness for the boy. Thirdly, because whatever sins Heaven may record against me, it has at least ever been my way to side against men who, confident of their superiority, seek with the cowardly courage of the strong to harm the weak. It is, Mademoiselle, the courage of the man who knows no fear when he strikes a woman, yet who will shake with a palsy when another man but threatens him."

"Why did you not tell me all this before?" she whispered, after a pause, and methought I caught a quaver in her voice.

I laughed for answer, and she read my laugh aright; presently she pursued her questions, and asked me the name of the boy I had defended. But I evaded her, telling her that she must need no further details to believe me.

"It is not that, Monsieur. I *do* believe you; I do indeed, but——"

"Hark, Mademoiselle!" I cried suddenly, as the clatter of many hoofs sounded near at hand. "What is that?"

A shout rang out at that moment.

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"Oh, Heaven!" exclaimed Mademoiselle, and again the voice sounded, this time more sinister:

"Halt, I say—in the king's name!"

The coach came to a standstill, and through the window I beheld the shadowy forms of several mounted men and the feeble glare of a lantern.

"Who travels in the carriage, knave?" came the voice again.

"Mademoiselle de Canaples," answered Michelot; then like a fool he must needs add, "have a care whom you knave, my master, if you would grow old."

"Tut tut! Let us behold this Mademoiselle de Canaples who owns so fearful a warrior for a coachman."

The door was flung rudely open, and the man bearing the lantern, whose rays shone upon a uniform of the Cardinal's guards, confronted us.

With a chuckle he flashed the light in my face, then suddenly grew serious.

"Good Heavens! Is it indeed you, M. de Luynes?" quoth he, adding with stern politeness, "it grieves me to disturb you, but I have a warrant for your arrest."

He was fumbling in his doublet as he spoke, and during the time I had leisure to scan his countenance, recognising to my surprise a young lieutenant of the guards who had but recently served with me, and with whom I had been on terms almost of friendship. His words, "I have a warrant for your arrest," came like a bolt from the blue to enlighten me, and to remind me of what St. Auban had that morning told me, and which for the nonce I had all but forgotten.

Upon hearing those same words, Yvonne, methought, grew pale, and her eyes were bent upon me with a look of surprise and pity.

"Upon what charge am I arrested?" I inquired with forced composure.

"My warrant mentions none, M. de Luynes. It is here." And he thrust before me a paper, whose purport I could have read in its shape and seals. Idly my eyes ran along the words:

"By these presents I charge and empower my lieutenant, Jean de Montrésor, to seize where'er he may be found, hold, and conduct to Paris the sieur Gaston de Luynes——"

And so further, until the Cardinal's signature ended the legal verbiage.

"In the king's name, M. de Luynes," said Montrésor, firmly yet deferentially, "your sword."

It would have been madness to have done aught but comply with this request, and so I surrendered my rapier, which he in his turn delivered to one of his followers. Next I stepped down from the coach, and turned to take leave of Mademoiselle, whereupon Montrésor, thinking that peradventure matters were as they appeared to be between us, and being a man of fine feelings, signed to his men to fall back, whilst he, himself, withdrew a few paces.

"Farewell, Mademoiselle," I said simply. "I shall carry with me for consolation the memory that I have been of service to you, and I shall ever—during the little time that may be left me—be grateful to Heaven for the opportunity that it has afforded me of causing you—perchance without sufficient reason—to think better of me. Farewell, Mademoiselle. Heaven guard you!"

It was too dark to see her face, but my heart bounded with joy to catch in her voice a quiver that argued, methought, regret for me.

"What does it mean, M. de Luynes? Why are they taking you?"

"Because I have displeased my Lord Cardinal, albeit, Mademoiselle, I swear to you that I have no cause for shame at the reasons for which I am being arrested."

"My father is Monseigneur de Mazarin's friend," she cried. "He is also yours. He shall exert for you that influence he possesses."

"'Twere useless, Mademoiselle. Besides, what does it signify? Again, farewell."

She spoke no answering word, but silently held out her hand. Silently I took it in mine, and for a moment I hesitated, thinking of what I was—of what she was. At last, moved by some power that was greater than my will, I stooped and pressed those shapely fingers to my lips. Then I stepped suddenly back and closed the carriage door, oppressed by a feeling akin to that of having done an evil deed.

"Have I your permission to say a word to my servant, M. le Lieutenant?" I inquired.

He bowed assent, whereat, stepping close up to the horror-stricken Michelot—

"Drive straight to the Château de Canaples," I said, in a low voice. "Thereafter return to the *Lys de France*, and there wait until you hear from me. Here, take my purse; there are some fifty pistoles in it."

"Speak but the word, Monsieur," he growled, "and I'll pistol a couple of these dogs."

"Pah! You grow childish," I laughed, "or can you not see that fellow's musket?"

"Oh! I'll risk his aim. I never yet knew one of those curs to shoot straight."

"No, no, obey me, Michelot. Think of Mademoiselle. Go! Farewell! If we should not meet again, my friend," I finished, as I seized his loyal hand, "what few things of mine are at the hostelry shall belong to you, as well as what may be left of this money. It is little enough payment, Michelot, for all your faithfulness——"

"Monsieur, Monsieur!" he cried.

"How now!" I muttered, "we are becoming women. Be off, you knave. Farewell."

The peremptoriness of my tone ended our leave-taking, and caused him to grip his reins and bring down his whip. The coach moved on. A white face, on which the moonlight fell, glanced at me from the window, then to my staring eyes naught was left but the back of the retreating vehicle, with one of the two saddle-horses that had been tethered to it still ambling in its wake.

"M. de Montrésor," I said, thrusting my bullet-pierced hat upon my head, "I am at your service."

(To be continued.)

EMMA: "No, George, it cannot be. We must part." (Bitterly.) "My purse-proud father will not accept a poor man for his son-in-law." George (frantically): "Say not so. I cannot give thee up. My heart will break. I——" Purse-proud father enters the room without observing them. Throws himself into a chair and groans aloud: "Bankruptcy! Ruin! Every penny swept away!" George (sweeping himself away at these words): "Farewell, then, Emma, since you discard me." But he says to himself, "Mighty narrow escape that."

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A Heart's Awakening.

"I DESIRE an explanation!" The man's voice was almost rough in its tone of command. "I wish to understand the situation exactly."

Enid Carew drew herself up haughtily.

"Indeed," she said, though, try how she would, she could not keep the trace of nervousness from her voice, "Indeed, and suppose I refuse, what then?"

She threw down her riding-whip on the table and sank into the nearest chair.

He stood, a giant of strength and anger, looking down at her.

"What then? I tell you," he began fiercely, then, suddenly changing his tone, said quietly, "I am waiting for the explanation of your conduct."

The girl looked up at him defiantly.

"As for that," and she shrugged her shoulders, "That is my own affair."

He stood with folded arms, looking sternly at her.

Enid shifted her position uneasily.

"For goodness' sake sit down, that tragic air is overdone. I wish I had not told you; but as I have, why not show a bold front, instead of——"

She did not finish her sentence, for a glance at his white set face, and eyes glittering with anger, made her falter. He came close to her, and stooping, took hold of her wrists,

"Enid, you shall rue this day, that I swear. To hink that all this time you have let me be your constant companion, let me—yes," he said fiercely, "let me make love to you, and all the while you had not the smallest intention of returning that love."

"Well, but my dear Jack, surely you could see it was merely a mild flirtation on my part. I am sure I quite understood your conduct to be but that."

"A mild flirtation! Only that!" he took up his hat. "If that is going to be your behaviour, I don't envy your future husband."

Enid sprang up, her face quivering.

"How dare you! How dare you!" she cried breathlessly.

"It is your own fault," he flung out recklessly; "You have destroyed my happiness, and my faith in woman."

She laughed scornfully. "That is quite the correct ending, the faith in woman is always the first to go."

He did not heed her. "I will be revenged; you were only playing with me, you say, you took all the love I had to give you, and have thrown it back into my face. Love, when so treated, turns to hate; for the hatred I now bear you I will treat all women as you have treated me. In the end," he said grimly, "it is the woman who suffers."

Without a word she turned and rang the bell.

He reached the door in long strides and gave one last long look back at her.

She was standing erect, her fair face flushed, her blue eyes flaming with anger.

Her wonderful beauty maddened him.

"You heartless flirt," he hissed, and was gone.

Enid threw herself in a chair, smarting under his words; she felt an unwonted tug at her heartstrings. What a pity money was so essential to her happiness! If it had not been for the money, perhaps——. But she checked the thought. She started, a little hand was resting on her shoulder.

"Dulcie!" she said sharply. "What are you doing here?"

"Sister Enid, do not be angry," said the child timidly, "I could not help being here. I was behind the screen reading my fairy tales and I could not help hearing. Oh, sister Enid," she cried piteously, "you are not a heartless flirt. Why did he call you that?"

Enid looked at the baby face, with its wondering eyes, lifted to hers with such adoring love. She hesitated as to how she should answer.

This child was the one being in the world who could touch her heart.

"It was only fun, Dulcie; he was only pretending," she said lamely.

The child's face flushed, and she lifted her head proudly.

"No, it was not pretence," she said firmly, "I know pretence; it was real. Why don't you tell me why he was so angry, and why he called you such horrid names?" still presisted the child.

"Because," broke out Enid, "he loves me."

Then, seeing the perplexity in the baby eyes, she said, "Darling, you can't understand such things just yet. Don't bother about them. Go and finish your fairy tales."

But Dulcie shook her head.

"I must bother. You are not a heartless flirt."

The persistence of the child began to weary Enid, and she said laughingly, "I tell you, darling, Enid likes to be called a flirt. Think of the dances, the lovely dresses, and all the gentlemen who are so fond of Enid, and who give her presents. All the glory, all the sparkle would not be there if Enid were not a heartless flirt." She spoke recklessly, her thoughts were of Jack Graham. She clapped her hands, "Dulcie! Dulcie!" she cried excitedly, "it is such fun to be a flirt."

For an instant Dulcie looked at her gravely, then she caught her sister's 'mood.

"How lovely you are," she cried, "Sister Enid, let me be like you; may I be a flirt?"

Enid started. How pretty, how fair the child was! How radiant the innocent eyes looked, shining with glee as she put the question, "Sister Enid, may I be a flirt?"

A wave of shame passed over Enid. To be a flirt did not seem to be such a thing to boast of after all. There must be better, fairer things for this little child.

She stooped and kissed the golden curls, so like her own.

"No, darling," she answered, with unwonted gentleness, "You had better be a good fairy princess."

"But shall I have the fun? Shall I be as happy as you?"

Enid stroked the child's head, then she said slowly, "Yes, my Dulcie, you will perhaps be happier," then, kissing the child, she suddenly changed her tone, "I am going to be very busy, dear, so run away now."

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Enid did not appear to be very busy, she still remained where she was, buried deep in thought.

That morning she had been her usual ride with Jack Graham. During that ride he had again spoken to her of love; this time she had not led him on to tell of his passion for her, but had told him that her engagement with Lord Dunlop would soon be publicly announced. She knew this was not at present true; Lord Dunlop had not actually proposed to her, but had acted in such a way that she expected him to do so at any moment. It had been her ambition for some time to become Lady Dunlop, and she was one to sacrifice all to her ambition. She was nineteen, and enjoying to the full her brilliant beauty. She loved that beauty far too well to think of throwing it away on a poor man like Jack Graham. She was interrupted in her meditations, a letter was brought to her; she opened it eagerly.

"At last the time has come! My lord is rather wanting in courage to propose by letter! However, it will save a good deal of unnecessary exertion on my part to scribble off a few lines of acceptance."

As she read the letter her face underwent a change, her colour slowly ebbed away, her fingers trembled visibly. With an angry cry she threw down the letter and paced the room.

"It can't be! It shall not be so!" she muttered. But it was so. The letter mocked at her, as the very witness that it was so.

She picked it up, holding it as though it would scorch her fingers, and read it again.

"Dear Enid," it ran, "I have hastily left for town, and perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you that Lady Kitty is my reason for having done so. She has promised to be my wife; I want you to be the first to congratulate me. She wished that you should be the very first to know. I shall never forget the fine time you and I have had together.—Yours ever,

RALPH."

Enid tore the letter into shreds; she shed tears; hot and fast they ran down her cheeks, tears of anger and mortification.

"Lady Kitty!" she ejaculated, "That designing little wretch! I really thought him safe in my hands. So she made him write at once and tell me! The insult! Her delight!" She stamped her foot, "she shall not triumph over me. She shall be informed of my news."

She got together pen and paper, and, with feverish haste, wrote:—

"Dear Ralph,—A thousand congratulations. I always knew Lady Kitty to be the one woman in the world for you. I was just writing to tell you of my news when your letter arrived. Congratulate *me*, for I, too, am to be married, to Colonel Dewey. We have known one another a long, long time, and I consider myself a happy, lucky, girl. He is a man worth loving.—Yours ever,

ENID CAREW."

She then wrote a note to Colonel Dewey, consenting to see him that afternoon. He had written to her pleading for an interview, and stating his reason for coming. He loved her, and wished to ask her to be his wife. She had meant to refuse to see him, but now she altered her mind. Granting this interview meant accepting his love.

The sun was gradually sinking to rest when Colonel Dewey arrived. He was a tall, fine man, without a good feature in his face except his eyes, though Enid had always declared there was no life in them. They were serious eyes of a deep grey. People looked into those eyes and respected and trusted him.

"You heartless flirt," he hissed, and was gone.

Just now, as he came eagerly forward, there was a great light in those eyes; Enid no longer denied their lack of life, but now the discovery irritated her. He had a humble, happy look, and she detested a humble man. Most of her lovers had been wild and impetuous.

Many voted Colonel Dewey a "bore"; he had a slow, drawling style of speaking, and a quiet, very slow way of doing things; but he had two great advantages, riches, and an even temper.

As Enid went to meet him, a shiver ran through her. Why had it to be this man?

"Enid!" he said, "Do you know what this means to me?"

"Yes," she answered, with a soft smile, "At least, I know what it means to me."

"Enid!" he exclaimed, "Dear, if you could but see

the depth of my regard for you! If you could but know the firm resolve with which I have dedicated my future life to your happiness and welfare; if, my dear love, you could but understand the intense gratitude I feel for such unspeakable joy!"

He put his arm around her.

"Enid! Turn your face towards me, that I may see your dear eyes of love. Oh, Enid, make me worthy of this."

Enid slowly raised her eyes and looked at him.

A deep, pure love shone in his eyes, a great gladness was written on his face; from such love and joy she hid her face.

She suddenly felt ashamed.

He pressed her closer to him.

"Sweetheart, I love you with my whole soul. Tell me that you love me."

Enid was silent, she felt the words would choke her; she freed herself from his embrace, and said, in a low voice, "Philip, I am glad I am to be your wife."

She stood looking out of the window. Slowly, very slowly the sun was sinking; in a few moments it would be gone, taking with it all brightness and warmth.

She felt a strange impulse to call out to it to stay yet a little while longer; a thousand thoughts flitted through her brain.

Her first thought had been, "I cannot marry him, he is too good, and I cannot wrong him so." Then, quick as lightning, came the thought of Lady Kitty's triumph; Jack Graham's words rose clearly before her. Her vanity was sorely hurt. Her face was pale, and in the fast fading daylight it looked wistful.

"I am glad I am to be your wife," she repeated, turning to him.

With a glad cry he took her again in his arms.

This silent, slow man, seemed transformed.

The intensity and depth of his passion made her tremble.

She longed, with a feverish longing, for the interview to end. She felt helpless before him, and unlike her usual self; and this feeling made her angry with herself and him.

When at last he left her, she flung herself into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

"What have I done? But I could not help it. As I cannot marry Lord Dunlop nor—nor Jack, it may as well be Philip as any other man. I could not wait, both Lady Kitty and Jack must hear of my engagement at once. Philip will always let me have my own way and that is the great thing."

It is nearly two years since the day Enid consented to be Colonel Dewey's wife.

Those two years had not passed well with her; her life, wedded to the man she had never loved, seemed hateful to her. She had deeply repented her rash act, but regret did not soften her towards the man she had so cruelly wronged; it gave her a cold dislike towards him, and everything he did irritated and bored her beyond bounds.

Philip still loved his beautiful young wife, but his love was patient and quiet, reposing infinite trust in her; he could not understand her restless character, judged by his own, restful, slow one.

To escape from the dumb pleading of her husband's love, to escape from those trusting eyes, she often left him for weeks together to visit friends.

He never accompanied her. She had once given a hint that she did not want him; he accepted the hint and stayed at home. People said it was this quiet acceptance of facts that was so bad for his wife. Perhaps such was the case. Perhaps he should have gone with her or bidden her stay at home. But he did neither; with a loving, quiet smile, he bade her go and enjoy herself.

How she did enjoy herself, she took care he should not know.

One sunny afternoon Enid was pacing the beautiful lawns of "The Hall," with her little six months' old baby in her arms.

The child had been ill, and had but recently left death's door. During that time the mother's heart had stirred to new emotions. A great passion awoke within her.

For the first time since her childhood she had fallen on her knees. She prayed God to spare the little life. She saw in her child a means whereby she might rise to better things. She felt that through her child she might fling off her old, wild, restless life, and be led by baby hands through happy peaceful paths.

God heard her prayer and the child lived. From that day she seemed a softened being, gentle and tender even towards her husband. As she now paced the garden she sang a soft lullaby until the little one fell into a sweet sleep; then, with a happy sigh, she settled herself in an easy chair, holding her baby tenderly to her.

She looked at the sweet face which death had so nearly snatched from her, and a wave of love swept over her.

"My baby!" she murmured. "I never thought I had such love in me. My little Dulcie, be mother's guardian angel; with these tiny hands keep mother back from her thoughtless ways."

Then, with a sob, she strained the child passionately to her.

"Oh, my baby! if you could see your mother as she really is, my baby, how you would despise her! Baby! that shall not be. Mother will live so that her child shall see, and not suffer. Baby! I will walk with you through life afresh."

Colonel Dewey came towards them. She turned to him, and held out her hand. There shone a light within her eyes he had but lately seen there.

"Come and look at baby," she said.

Something in her softened voice, in her eyes, made him exclaim, "My darling, tell me you love me?"

The words broke from him ere he knew he had said them.

Enid looked at him and saw the same deep love that was there on their wedding day, and, for the first time since then, she longed to answer him as he wished.

And why not? Surely she was beginning to love this tender, true husband! She looked at her baby, was he not the father of her child? Yes, she was sure, at last, the love for him was growing.

She unconsciously pressed the child closer to her, she felt so happy.

Then she said in a low voice, with eyes bent upon the little sleeping face, "Philip, you know I love you."

"And, Enid, are you happy, dear?"

"Yes, so happy," she pressed her cheek to that of her baby; then she added almost passionately; "Philip, help me to be a better woman. Never take your love from me. If we are ever in sorrow, let our love for one another compensate for all."

Never had she felt such joy of living as now, with the sweet sunshine around her, and her baby in her arms.

Then came a fearful day; early one morning their child was suddenly taken from them. All that day

Enid lay in a stupor, holding the child in her arms and caressing its cheek. When at last it dawned upon her that this cold, stiff form was her little daughter, she recoiled from it, uttering low moans of anguish and despair.

When she left her child, her husband came to meet her. His words of love and comfort were checked as he gazed upon her face. Her eyes shone with a strange, cold light, her lips were tightly drawn in one hard line.

He put his hand upon her shoulder, he tried to soften those cruelly cold eyes.

"Enid, let me try and comfort you. Remember your own words, 'If we are ever in sorrow let our love compensate for all.'"

She broke into a harsh, bitter laugh.

"Then, I did not know what sorrow was," she said.

"But, dear, you knew what love was," and his voice was melting with tenderness. "You know that it can heal all."

She answered coldly, "I lied to you. It was not love for you I felt, but love for my child, who now lies dead. God has been cruel and merciless. Why did He let me taste such happiness only to take it from me? He showed no pity, and I will show neither mercy nor pity to any one."

Her husband put his arms around her, the tears were in his eyes.

"My wife," he said huskily, "you are wild with pain and do not know what you say. Hush, Enid, for my sake."

She broke from him.

"I will have no pity, no love, since the only thing that made my life happy is denied me. Go from me," she cried, "I wish to be alone."

Her words struck deeply through his heart, and left it slowly bleeding. With eyes full of pain, he turned and left her.

For months Enid remained in a wild state of grief, shutting herself away from her husband, leading a solitary, miserable life.

The months grew into years; another child was given to her, this time a son.

No sign of love shone in her eyes when they brought her baby to her. She turned from it hastily. "Take it away," she cried, "Lest I learn to love it, and then it will die. I will never love again."

And so the baby grew into a little grave-eyed child, hungering for his mother's love. As time passed slowly by, Enid felt a vague uneasiness filling her heart. Her husband's love for her seemed to have died, and a stolid, cold indifference reigned in its stead.

Her son, Roy, had her little daughter's eyes, and, from them, always seemed to shine, for her, a dumb, pathetic pleading that stirred her heart with strange emotions. A vague unrest entered that heart which, at her baby's death, had turned to stone. Now she felt an undefined craving for she knew not what.

When love would have entered once more into her life she thrust it, trembling, from her. But sometimes she felt a longing to hold her boy in her arms, and satisfy his hungering gaze.

One night she dreamt a dream. Her boy was calling her with outstretched arms; she hastened to him, and folded him in a passionate embrace, all the pent-up love rushing out in mighty strength. She put him from her in order to gaze upon the little face, when her blood ran cold within her. The child was dead; she had crushed the life from out him, in that one long embrace.

She awoke with a cry on her lips, and a great fear at her heart.

During the remainder of that night she lay awake, her brain on fire with many thoughts. She found herself repeating words until their meaning had ceased to strike her.

"My boy, I must not love you, it will be your death. I cannot, dare not, love you," she said to herself over and over again. When the dawn began to break she had come to a firm resolve to go away and drown her uneasiness of heart in social pleasure.

"I am getting morbid," she reasoned with herself, "I am getting even careless of my beauty."

That morning, as she was arranging the flowers in the breakfast-room, she said to her husband:

"Philip! I think I will go and pay a visit to the Chasemore's."

Philip continued to read his morning paper; he did not answer her.

She turned slightly to him. "Philip, did you hear?"

"You are going to the Chasemore's," he said in a tone of indifference.

She knew his disapproval of her friends, and had expected him to protest against her going. She felt a longing to bring a little life into his voice, even if it should be anger.

"Philip," she said slowly, and with emphasis, "I always have great fun at the Chasemore's." She looked at him significantly, but he was not looking at her.

She turned away, hurt and vexed; angry words sprang to her lips, but she checked them. She was holding in her hand a little china dog she had once given to her baby girl. It recalled those happy days. She suddenly wished her husband would ask her not to go; the "fun" at the Chasemore's seemed to fade away.

"Philip," she said, and there were tears in her eyes. "Shall I go, or would you rather that I stayed?"

Philip did not see those tears, he rose, and stood looking out of the window.

His pride was struggling with his love. She herself had proposed to stay and he longed to ask her to remain. Yet how often had she been on the point of yielding to some wish of his, only to suddenly turn coldly from him? How often had his words of love been withered upon his lips? Pride forbade him to trust again to her waywardness. He stifled his desire to go to her and bid her stay; and his voice rang out cold, and seemingly indifferent:

"Go by all means, it is best that you should sometimes have a little fun." And so she went.

On the evening of Enid's arrival at Chasemore Hall, a ball was given. She had nearly danced the evening through when, feeling strangely tired, she escaped from the hot crowded rooms into the fresh night air. As she was strolling in the garden she saw, coming towards her, the figure of a man; as he came nearer she felt a strange quickening of her heart, the figure seemed familiar. It was Jack Graham.

He came to her with outstretched hand, a glad smile upon his lips. She saw the look in his eyes and turned away. She did not hear him murmur to himself, "Now is the time of my revenge." She only heard him call her name in a low voice, "Enid!" Then, he continued abruptly, "I have just discovered that Lady Dunlop is not you. Is it true that you are Dewey's wife?"

"I am Colonel Dewey's wife," she answered. "I discovered, just in time, that I did not care enough for Lord Dunlop to be his wife."

Jack Graham had only returned from South Africa a few months; during that period he had lost no time in discovering what had become of Enid. Having heard she was, at the present time, at the Chasemore's, he determined to follow her thither, not from any feeling of love—that had left him long ago—but from a keen desire to punish her for her treatment of him years ago.

After that evening, Jack Graham and Mrs. Dewey were to be seen always together. Some said it was scandalous, but these were only recent friends of the Chasemore's, and they were told, "It is nothing; it is merely Mrs. Dewey's way."

Weeks had slipped into months, and each day had been spent in Jack's company, until her heart was filled with feverish unrest. One day the crisis came, he had pleaded with such earnestness that it seemed as though she were to be carried away.

"Come," he concluded, "trust yourself to me for ever, and you will never regret it."

His eyes were turned from hers, and she did not see their evil look, nor hear his muttered whisper, "In the end the woman suffers. This is my revenge."

Unconsciously she put her hand to her heart; her breath came in gasps.

"Let me think one moment. Give me time, give me time."

Suddenly a footstep was heard approaching.

Jack started to his feet.

A telegram was brought to Enid; she opened it and read: "Do not return home; Roy has scarlet fever."

She stood staring at the piece of paper. Jack strode to her side and read the news.

He took her hand in his, "Fortune favours us," he said abruptly. "Now—"

But she interrupted him with a fierce gesture; she put her hand to her forehead and sank into a chair.

So it was to be the same thing with this other child. She had dreaded to let herself love her boy for fear that he might be taken away from her, and yet, perhaps, after all, he was going to die.

Now, against all reasoning, she felt a mighty longing to give her boy her love, reckless of all consequences. Now her one thought was that he was needing her.

"Go, leave me!" she cried huskily.

"Enid! You do not mean to let this make any difference! You know you do not care for the child."

She rose and drew herself to her full height.

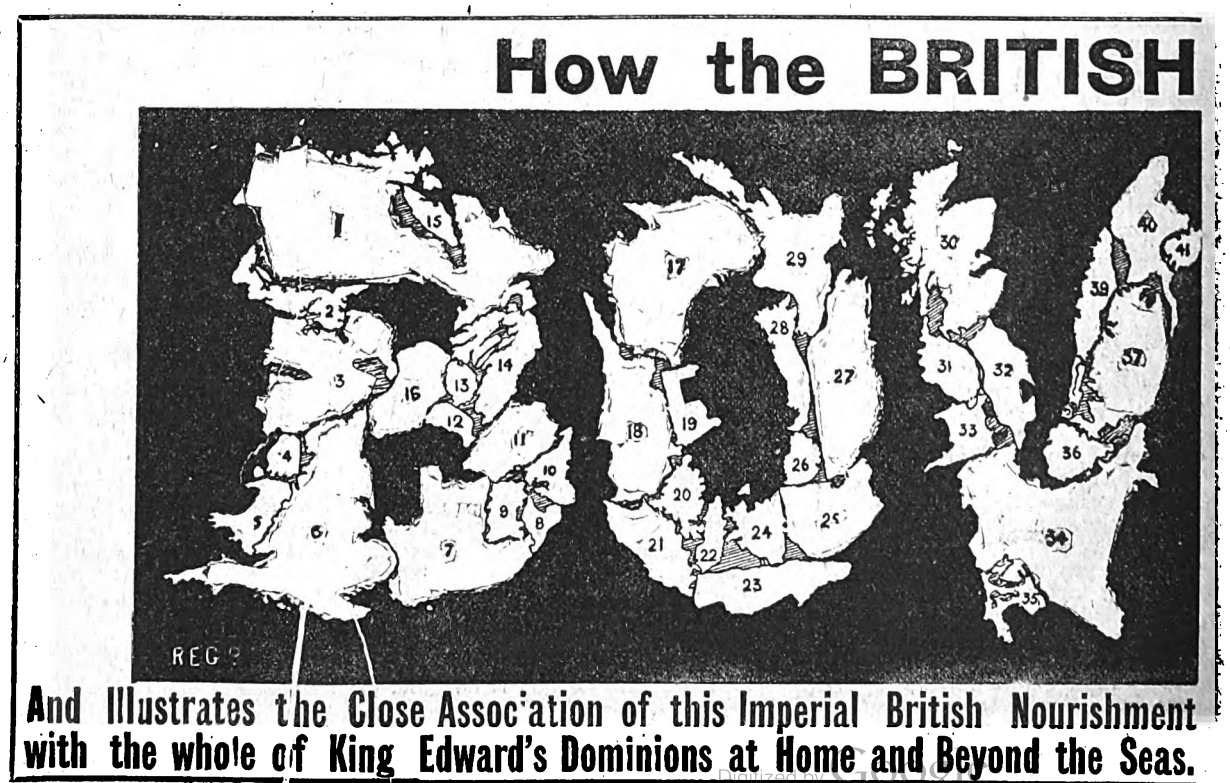
"You do not know me," she said. "Neither did I know myself. Oh, baby! I have tried to starve myself from your love, and now my heart is crying out against it. Oh, baby! What have you not saved me from? Jack, I will go to my boy, and, oh! if you have any pity, forget what has happened between us, forget what we have said to-day."

"How can I forget?" he said angrily. "Forget, indeed, when you have let me—"

She interrupted him hastily; "Oh, I know, I know; but I am not wholly bad, though, to others, it must seem so. You do not really love me, it is but a mad fancy, and again, I intreat you to forget. I was in a wild dream; I was unhappy, and I wished to drown my thoughts in excitement. Jack! remember I am a mother—and forget me."

"You should have thought of that before," he said coldly.

He was angry, but looking at her face, he could see how remorse had already laid its terrible finger upon



her. He saw the pleading in her eyes, and he felt pity for her suffering.

"Enid," he said slowly, "I will forget."

* * * *

"Why did you come?" said Colonel Dewey. "You can do no good, and will only run the risk yourself."

Enid turned on him fiercely.

"Why did you not send for me? How dared you keep me from my child?"

"You said you disliked him," answered her husband slowly, "and I thought you would never forgive me if I brought you in the midst of scarlet fever."

She looked at him in silence, and something in her gaze made him take a step nearer to her. He put his hand upon her shoulder.

"Enid, do you really care so much, dear?"

There was a pleading in his eyes; a note of his old love for her had crept back unawares into his voice, the sight of her suffering had called it there. The tears were running down her face.

"Philip! We cannot lose this one, too. My heart has never healed from that great blow, and God cannot be so cruel as to take my boy from me; he is all we have; he must not die. Oh, Philip! I have been hungering for this love, but I feared to love him. My heart was bitter, and I thought to drown my unhappiness in excitement, so I went away. Yet if I had known he really wanted me, I would have stayed. Philip, take me to him."

When she saw the tiny wasted face of her child her heart contracted painfully. She met his brilliant restless eyes and knelt down beside him.

"Mother has come," she said softly. "Mother is here."

She put her hand upon the burning forehead. At her touch the fever-stricken eyes remained still, a smile played round the little mouth. Only for one instant, then, once more the little body was tossing to and fro in restless movements. Enid tried to soothe him, tried once again to recall that smile, but he did not heed her. He was separated from her by the awful gulf of unconsciousness. She turned blindly to her husband.

"Philip," she said piteously, her voice breaking with tears, "help me to bear it."

He went to her and put his arms around her, and, in silence, they watched the struggles of their child.

Together, thus, they looked for the critical moment when the fever would leave its victim.

The child recovered, and was given back to the mother's aching heart.

Night and day Enid watched over her boy with humble, joyous gratitude. Her soul was filled to overflowing, with a great, solemn peace.

Not only was her child restored to her, but, now best of all to her, durng those long, long, weary days and weeks of watching she had learnt to love her husband; learnt to give him what she once thought she could never give. Her heart was full of deep, full happiness.

Philip's love for her had never died, it now met hers in a great flood of tenderness.

"Enid! Say 'I love you, Philip!' and, this time, look deep into my eyes."

She lifted her face to his, and, with eyes full of love and reverence, put her arms around his neck, saying: "My Philip! I love you so; I love you so!"

W. Henderson.

EMPIRE spells BOVRIL

Note.

The shapes are correct, but the sizes are not in proportion.

Each number indicates a separate part of the Empire.

How many parts can you name?

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The Lovers' Leap.

WHITE ELK the son of Standing Bear, the Shoshone chieftian, sat stolidly in the grim circle of Indians that sat round the council fire. He sat unmoved as each Indian in turn thrust his hand forward with the fingers outspread and the thumb pointing downward.

The last Indian in the circle had made the sign. Standing Bear rose and stood stiff and stern in the red light of the burning embers. Every eye was upon him. White Elk sat looking stolidly at him through half-closed eyelids. Standing Bear thrust his arm out at full length and slowly spread his fingers apart and turned his thumb towards the earth. A scream came from a group of women standing near the chief's lodge. Then two old squaws led away a young Indian woman who still sobbed in spite of the storied stoicism of her race.

The sentence of death had been passed on White Elk. He slowly rose as his father turned towards him and extended a piece of black wampum. He took it and tucked it in his girdle, bowed slowly to the council, and strode away to his own tepee, where he sat calmly puffing at his pipe long after the council had broken up and its members had gone quietly to their lodges.

White Elk sat alone in the silence of the night listening to the rushing waters of the Popoagie. It was the voice of his executioner. Three days more and he was to be cast from a high rock into the "Place of Punishment," the deep hole in the mountains, which swallowed up the rushing Popoagie, and carried it somewhere deep down into the bowels of the earth. Into this place White Elk was to be thrown because the Shoshones believed that the person who disappeared into the depths along with the roaring waters of the Popoagie, died a death more dreadful than any other that could be meted out to him. Because the Popoagie drew its victims so deeply down into the dark regions under the earth that the soul could never escape and find its way to the happy hunting ground of the tribe.

White Elk was not afraid to die. He had met death face to face a dozen times, and had not trembled. He had fought with the Blackfeet and the Sioux, and led his warriors to victory on many a hard fought field. He had fought hand to hand with the murderous Apaches, and never knew what it was to be afraid. But in spite of his seeming indifference, he shivered as he heard the fierce roar of the Popoagie tumbling riotously over the rocks and leaping down the precipice to disappear in the dark depths below.

He pictured his soul fighting with the angry water to regain the upper air, that it might ascend to the happy hunting ground in the clouds. But he knew the Popoagie would triumph. He was certain that no soul could defeat the malevolent spirit of the Popoagie.

White Elk could regard death with equanimity, but he could not bear the thought of an eternity spent battling with the spirit of the waters while Laughing Eyes waited for him in vain in the happy hunting ground. White Elk's head dropped forward and he groaned. He heard a sound behind him and sprang to his feet. Laughing Eyes stood beside him in the moonlight. She motioned him with her hand and he followed her out to the cliff overlooking the deep crevice, down which the Popoagie lost itself. On the cliff the two sat in the moonlight.

"You must not give yourself to the spirit of the Popoagie," said the girl. "You can go away. I will go with you. The Blackfeet have been your enemies but they love you, for you are a mighty warrior. To them you can go and they will make you a chief, and I will go with you."

White Elk sat silent. Then he spoke: "I must die, because I did not put to death Nazalla, the Blackfeet chief. I had my spear at his throat. I might have killed him. But years ago Nazalla spared my life when as a boy I was hunting alone in the forest. He gave me food and water and showed me the way back to my own people. I could not kill him as he lay wounded. But the Shoshones fear Nazalla. They think that with him dead the Blackfeet would never more triumph in battle. It is true. But I could not kill him. I would rather die and disappear into the under darkness forever."

The girl fell on her knees and intreated him. White Elk softly stroked her hair. But he only shook his head in reply to her intreaties. Long the two sat there. Then they arose and walked back to the village, and White Elk left Laughing Eyes at the door of her father's lodge.

Three days passed away, and the next morning just before sunrise all the Shoshones were gathered in view

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of the great rock that lifted itself above the deep sink hole of the Popoagie. The medicine men of the tribe swaying their bodies chanted a death hymn.

As the first rays of the sun shone down the valley and rested redly upon the little group on the rock, White Elk stepped forward with a strong young Indian on either side. He turned and looked keenly back at the group of women who stood about Laughing Eyes. He gave a sign and the two young Indians rested their hands on his shoulder. White Elk stood with his face lifted up for a moment to the clouds.

He cast his eyes around and took a last look at the woods and at his people standing grim and silent in the clefts of the rocks. Then he sprang forward and shot straight downward from the top of the cliff. His body turned half over in the air. Then it struck with a splash in the roaring water and was drawn downward and disappeared forever in the cavernous depths of the "place of punishment."

The Indians stood looking downwards where the form of the young chief had disappeared. Then there was a cry and all looked again towards the top of the rock just as they saw Laughing Eyes hurl herself headlong downward towards the rushing water. She sank from sight, and her body, too, was drawn downward to the depths. White Elk's soul would not have to escape the spirit of Popoagie to meet that of Laughing Eyes.

D. F. P.

Photo Competition.

Two correct claims have been received this week in connection with the Photo Competition, and £5 notes have been sent to:

Miss LILY M. MERSON (No. 67),
18 Cave Street,
St. Paul's,
Bristol.

Mr. FREDERICK CARPENTER (No. 69),
61 New Road East,
Buckland,
Portsmouth.

A Bile Bean Miracle.

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ANÆMIA AND HEART TROUBLE CURED.

CHARLES FORDE'S Bile Beans for Biliousness have just worked a cure which is locally regarded as miraculous, at Woburn Sands, amidst the most charming scenery in Bedfordshire. The subject is Miss Ellen Cooke, a domestic servant, of Inwood's Cottages; and to a *Bedfordshire Express* reporter she said: "It is now quite 11 years since I began to be ill. I suffered from anæmia with all its accompanying weaknesses. As time went on my condition grew worse. I had no colour and endured most severe pain. The climax appeared to be reached about four years ago when I was taken very ill indeed. I was told that I also suffered from ulcerated stomach and chronic indigestion. I had palpitation, which made me afraid of overtaxing myself in the least. As far as I dared I continued to attend to my duties; and the result was that I became utterly prostrated, and had to remain lying down and perfectly quiet until I could recover. On one occasion I set out to reach a place five minutes' walk away, but I was so very weak that I swooned before I got there. Even slow walking made me exhausted and faint. For

six weeks I was too weak to live on anything but milk food. Several times I went in for different medicines, but all efforts to bring about a cure were perfectly futile, until one day I happened to read in the weekly paper how a similarly extreme case had been cured by Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness. My father strongly advised me to give them a trial; and I consented. I had not been taking the Beans long before I felt that I was benefiting. My appetite improved day by day; and the food was digested without giving me any trouble such as I used to have. My spirits brightened, my strength increased, and life seemed to open out new promises of joy. Thanks entirely to Charles Forde's Bile Beans, I am now thoroughly recovered. I have neither the sickly look nor feeling I had before; and my appetite is quite satisfactory. The palpitation, ulcerated stomach, and chronic indigestion are complete strangers to me; and I never experience the 'fagged' feeling I used to do. Only the other day I walked ten miles; and neither then nor since have I experienced the least discomfort or sign of weariness."

Miss Cooke's parents fully bore out her statement, and said they had despaired of her ever being restored to health.

More conclusive testimony to the wonderful powers of Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness could not be desired. They are the "World's Greatest Specific" for anæmia in its worst forms, summer-end fag, chronic indigestion, palpitation, ulcerated stomach, and debility; while they are also unsurpassed for headache, dizziness, pains in the chest, side, and back, constipation, piles, pimples, face sores, blood impurities, liver and kidney disorders, female ailments, nausea, and fulness after meals. Obtainable from all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., for price 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d. (2s. 9d. box contains 3 times 1s. 1½d).

Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 20th. Post-cards only, please.

Easily Done.

JACK: "Maud wants to know why you shun her company now." Tom: "Well, the fact is, I'm hard up." Jack: "I'll tell her, and you needn't shun her any more." Tom (brightening up): "By Jove, do you think so?" Jack: "Yes. She'll shun you."

Bobby Knew His Name.

"MAMMA, I know the gentleman's name that called to see Aunt Ellie last night, and nobody told me either." "Well, then, what is it, Bobby?" "Why, George Dont. I heard her say 'George, don't!' in the parlour four or five times running. That's what his name is."

It was Necessary.

"MY friend," he said to the hotel manager, "I'm a very nervous man. Couldn't you give me a room with a fire-escape in it? You've got one, haven't you?" "Oh, yes," replied the manager. "And I might remark that, except in case of fire we keep the bulldog chained at the bottom of it." And the weary stranger sighed and sauntered forth.

He Hadn't a Chance.

JENKINS: "Well, sir, I gave it to that man straight, I can tell you, sir. He is twice as big as I am, too, but I told him exactly what I thought of his rascally conduct right to his face, and I called him all the names in the dictionary." Spudds: "And didn't he try to hit you, Jenkins?" Jenkins: "No, sir, he didn't. And when he tried to answer back I just hung up the telephone and walked away."

What Could Have Upset Her?

"I DON'T believe in feeding beggars at the door," said Mrs. Will. "You feed them once and they are sure to come back." "Well, I don't know," replied Mrs. Yeast. "I always give them bread when they come to my door, and I can't say that I ever knew a beggar to come the second time." "Oh, well, Mrs. Yeast, you make your own bread, do you not?" That was all she said, and yet Mrs. Yeast went down the street like a straw hat on a windy day.

He was All Right.

AN unfortunate fellow who had worked in a Lancashire cotton mill went out of his mind and was removed to an asylum. A fellow-worker, who chanced to be passing the asylum a few months after the man's removal, saw Jimmy sitting in the grounds smoking his clay pipe. "Hullo! Jimmy," he called out, "how are ta gettin' on?" "Oh, Ah'm gooin' on fust-rate," answered Jimmy. "Ah'm very glad to hear it, lad. Tha'll happen be gettin' back to work, sooin. What's ta think?" "What?" exclaimed Jimmy in huge surprise. "Live in a big house an' a grand garden like this, and go back to wark? Does ta think Ah'm wrang in mi yed?"

Drew the Line.

THE lion was at no pains to conceal his irritation. "I must insist," he finally declared, "upon knowing what that affair is which you are pointing at me." The hunter trembled violently. "It is a gun, sir," he faltered. The lion frowned. "Very well," said he, "but if I ever find it is a camera I shall hold you personally responsible."

The Way of Women.

THE MAID: "Mrs. Brown-Jones, ma'am." The Mistress: "Oh, such a bore! Tell her I am out. Janet." The Maid: "Yes'm." The Mistress: "But stay. What kind of a dress is she wearing?" The Maid: "A new one, ma'am; and it looks just like a late Parisian style." The Mistress: "Gracious! Tell her I'll be down without a moment's delay."

Couldn't Help her Hands.

HUSBAND: "The new cook makes everything too salt. It's terrible." Wife: "Well, she can't help that, poor thing. It isn't her fault that her hands are big." Husband: "What earthly difference can that make?" Wife: "That shows how much you know about housekeeping. The cookery books always measure salt by the pinch."

Not Good Enough.

SERGEANT (to private returned from South Africa): "Come now, fall in to be mustered. Don't you know this is the day for the commanding-officer's muster parade?" Private (in undertone): "Well, well, isn't it bad enough to have just returned from being 'peppered' by the Boers without having to be mustered by the commanding-officer?"

Lizzie's Great Trouble.

"MAGGIE, I am in great trouble. I am engaged to two young men at the same time, and the wedding day is set for both on the same date." "Well, Lizzie, which is the best?" "I don't know. Henry is a banker's son and Arthur is a reporter." "Well, goodness gracious, be sensible and take Arthur. He can describe the wedding in his paper."

How he Won the Bet.

A GENTLEMAN made a bet with a friend in a well-known West End club that he could not satisfy a cabman. "Done," said his friend, and the money was staked. They came out of the club, hailed a passing cab, rode a short distance, got out of the cab, and gave the driver a sovereign. The driver looked first at the sovereign, then at the gentleman, and said, "It's a long time since I had a 'quid,' sir; you might give me twopence for a drink to save changing it."

Insult to Injury.

A PARTY of amateurs some time ago arranged for a shoot, and ordered thirty pigeons from a dealer in a neighbouring town. The shooting was of a really wonderful character, but the actual performances need not be described in detail. The net results will be gathered readily from the following note which was subsequently received from the dealer. It ran: "Gentlemen, I beg sincerely to thank you for your order, and to intimate that I shall be only too happy to supply you with any number of birds on future occasions of the sort. The whole of the thirty birds, for which you paid me at the rate of eightpence per head, returned home in safety, and, moreover, brought with them a stray pigeon. My price to your party henceforth will be three-halfpence per bird."

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The way we make our own faces—Secrets of face transformation—Changeableness of beauty and its causes—Some strange facts concerning the variableness of beauty—"Odd-faced" beauty—The countenance the counterpart of the mind—How pleasing expressions become permanent—How a person's habitual look is acquired—How permanent expressions can be transformed—Metaphysical secrets of keeping young and preserving a youthful appearance—The author's investigations into the causes why some individuals look younger than others at a certain age—Discovery of a great metaphysical secret—Wonders of the skin—Effects of mental emotions upon the skin—Bad complexions and their causes—Diet that spoils and diet that improves the complexion—General care of the complexion—Construction, growth, and wonders of the hair—Why hair falls out—Premature greyness: its causes and prevention—General care of the hair—Superfluous hairs and how to treat them—Wrinkles: their prevention and treatment—Freckles, tan, and blackheads—Oily skin, dry skin, and loose skin—How the nose can be improved—Protruding ears and their treatment—Offensive breath—Anatomy of the teeth—Why teeth decay—General care of the teeth—Tallness, and how to attain it—Round shoulders and how to cure them—How to acquire a full chest—Perfect form and figure: their proper proportions—Thinness, and its treatment—Excessive stoutness—Care of the hands—Care of the feet—Physiognomy; or, the art of reading character from the face—Mental influences upon health—Power of the mind over the body—Influence of the mind in curing diseases—How the mind can cause dyspepsia—Effect of the direction of thought to the heart—How real diseases often supervene upon fancied ailments—How violent passions injure health—Laughter as a medicine—Ailments cured by laughter—Wonders of digestion—Relative value to our bodies of the principal articles of food—Fruits and vegetables as medicine: their various influences upon the physical system—Health-preserving diet and its consistency—Diet favourable to mental exertion and intellectual culture—Influence of various foods upon our passions and propensities—The influence exerted by the mind upon the appetite and digestion—Some perilous articles of food—Exercise and its relation to health—Baths and bathing: their influence upon health—The way we breathe, and how it affects our health—The marriage state, and its influence upon health—Statistics showing the comparative vitality of married and single persons—100 professions, trades, and occupations: their respective influences upon health and long life—Sleep, and its relation to health—Insomnia, and its treatment—The eyes, and how to preserve them—The ears and hearing: how to prevent deafness—The voice: its cultivation and preservation—Memory, and how to improve it—Sudden failure of memory—Rules for cultivating the memory—Influence of diet upon memory—Stammering, and how to cure it—Prevention of disease—Nervousness—Blushing: its physiology and treatment—Rules of life for attaining longevity—Compendium of the mental, moral, physical, and external influences that lessen the years of our earthly existence—How to live to a hundred—Premature old age and its causes—Short biographies of 30 modern centenarians, whose ages range from 115 to 185 years—General principles that can be laid down for the anticipation of longevity—The eight signs of long life.

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A New Feature.

In Confidence.

Conducted by Madge Morris.

THE following are replies to some of the many letters which I had received before the Editor of this paper agreed to devote a page to my correspondence each week. All communications must be sent to me personally at the offices of this paper.—MADGE MORRIS.

"Stephanie."—You have placed yourself in an awkward position. You are engaged to a man to whom you are deeply attached, and the spirit of mischief suggested that you should test the affections of your lover by walking out with someone else and allowing your lover to see you. He is too much of a gentleman to ask for an explanation in public, but he writes to you—a very nice letter, judging by the copy you have sent—and asks you to explain. Your answer is a reproach that he cannot trust you, and he accordingly ceases his visits. Now you see what you have done, and you ask me to advise you how to rectify matters. You must tell him plainly what you did, and ask forgiveness for an act for which you are now heartily sorry. If you write as you should, I have not the least doubt he will be ready to forgive. His letter shows him to be every inch a man.

"Maidie" puts the following question: "Should a young woman marry an old man?" She then proceeds to tell me that she is twenty and has had an offer of marriage from a man of forty-three, which she is disposed to accept. She believes she would be happy with him. As a rule, I think it unadvisable to marry when the ages are so different; in the earlier years of the married life the disparity is not perhaps so noticeable; but as the time rolls on, the one gets old while the other is still in the prime of life. And then, very often, unhappiness begins. Still, I have known two cases similar to yours, and in each instance the man and wife have been thoroughly happy. One of these husbands is now nearly seventy, and I know that the wife of forty-five has been, and is, as happy as anyone can wish to be. Other conditions being favourable, "Maidie," I see no objection.

No, "Queenie," it is not possible for you to love two young men with equal affection. Either you love one better than the other, or you really are not in love with either—you merely have a liking for them. Put yourself to the test. Try to imagine that one of them has proposed and you have accepted him; think over his character generally; then ask yourself whether you would like to spend your life with him. If you do this with all seriousness—as you would do before accepting an offer of marriage—you will not be long in discovering the true state of your feelings.

Your conduct, "Claude," is very foolish; I will not use any harder expression. You are dearly in love with a girl who, you believe, would make you an excellent wife. She is domesticated and loving, but she has not had the opportunity of educating herself to a great extent. She is doing her best to remedy this defect, and your friends tell you that your choice is a good one. But you are afraid of what your fellow-clerks might say, so you propose to break off the engagement. Perhaps you will see how unmanly and foolish your conduct is when you read it in black and white. Trust to your mother's instinct; she, who has your welfare at heart, advises you to marry the young woman, and a mother's love makes her far-sighted.

Yes, "In Doubt," I advise you to tell your lover that you were engaged two years ago to another. In the first place, if you really love him, it will come quite naturally to you to wish to tell him everything, and apart from this, he is sure to hear of it sooner or later, from someone else. To be perfectly open with those we love is the only way to insure a happy life with them.

"Troubled One."—Your dearest friend is indeed not worthy the name of a friend. I must say you were indiscreet to confide in her your love of a man you had never spoken to. Nineteen is very young; and you will most probably meet someone who suits you far better than this man. I should let it stand as it is. To write and explain to any man that you are "passionately in love" with him, would only be to place you in a very awkward position, and as things stand you surely can carry it off as a joke. No nice-minded girl would care to be thought pushing or forward.

"Irish Lass."—I am sorry to hear that you and your young man have quarrelled over the photo of another man, and I must say that quarrelling over so trivial a matter speaks badly for you both. Remember a breach is very easy to make, and very difficult to heal. I should either see him or write to him, and tell him you are lonely and miserable, and, if he really cares for you, he will be glad enough to be friends again.

PETTINGILL'S HUNT.

JIM PETTINGILL, who is a stout man, went home to his wife the other evening and asked her where she kept the key of his gladstone, as he wished to pack up a few things and take the night train for Glasgow to look after some important business matters.

Mrs. Pettingill told him to go upstairs to her room and he would find the key in the pocket of her black dress, which was hanging on a nail behind the door.

Poor, foolish mortal, he did not know that it was easier for the eye of a rich man to crawl through a camel than for his miserable self to find the pocket of his wife's dress.

Blinded by his own confidence, he took the dress off the nail, and that moment his sufferings commenced. He took a short survey of the garment as he held it up in his left hand in order to locate the position of the pocket.

His eyes rested on a small opening, and he thrust his hand into it, only to find his fingers gliding through a kind of bottomless concern, and then sticking his arm into it to the hilt he observed that his hand was protruding from an aperture on the other side. This caused him to change the position of the dress, and he saw another opening, and sounded its depths, and ascertained that it was the same mysterious hole he had been in a moment before.

This slightly annoyed him, and, after throwing off his coat, he went again in search of the pocket. He saw a little slit on the other side, and a softer light came into his eyes. "This is it," he murmured, and, putting his head into a shallow flounce, commenced to grope for the key, which, however, was sleeping snugly in the pocket at least two feet away. Pettingill got angry. He determined to find the pocket or die with his face to the foe, and the next minute he commenced stabbing the dress with both hands, hitting it straight blows from the shoulder, and dancing round it, just as if he were engaged in a rough-and-tumble fight.

He glanced at the clock, and saw that the train would start in forty minutes, and once more he jumped for the dress with a low yell that indicated plainly that he was angry enough to match himself against a hornet. He jammed his head into the folds of the dress, and commenced digging with both hands, and the air got full of satin bows, pieces of Watteau pleats and smothered growls.

While seated in a chair resting himself, he glared at the crumpled dress lying on the floor, and the idea occurred to him that the only way to keep the pocket from dodging him was to put the dress on. He did so, and then renewed his search, but his hands would slide into loops, furbelows, folds, flounces, and everything else except the much-desired pocket.

This was more than he could stand, and he determined to take off the dress and tear it to pieces, and thus discover the dwelling-place of the pocket. He pulled the dress up over his head as if he was divesting himself of a shirt, and it got caught in his braces and wrapped itself round his neck in a peculiar way, and he stooped forward and tugged at it with all his strength, but it would not give an inch, and appeared to tighten its grip round his head.

It was hot, and he was smothering in its folds, and, in order to release himself, he beat the air with both hands and danced up and down in one spot until the window-panes rattled.

The dress, however, knew that it was getting the better of him, and would not let him go, and then Pettingill, in his rage, made a blind dash and butted the basin and jug off the washstand and upset the rocking-chair, which prodded him severely in the ribs. The next dive he made the dressing-table suffer, and cologne bottles and powder boxes, mingling with a tin bath-tub and a bird-cage, rolled over the floor.

Mrs. Pettingill heard the crash, and hastening upstairs, discovered her husband lying on the floor on his back, with his arms and head bound up in her dress, and kicking both his legs in the air and using profanity to the tune of 140 degrees in the shade. She pulled him out of the dress, and he sat up on the floor and gazed at her in a dazed way, and rubbed his ribs with one hand, and wiped the blood off his nose with the other.

There was a look in his eyes which told Mrs. Pettingill that it was not the time to talk to her husband, so she merely picked up the dress, and without any trouble at all stuck her hand in a certain place and took out the key, which she handed him without saying a word. It was too late to catch the train, so Pettingill quietly bathed his bruised head and then went to a locksmith's, and when he came home he brought his key with him, but it was chained to a bar of pig-iron.

L. Y. PEARS.

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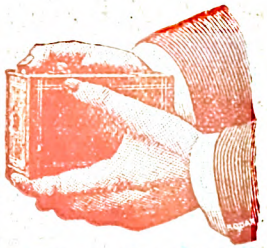

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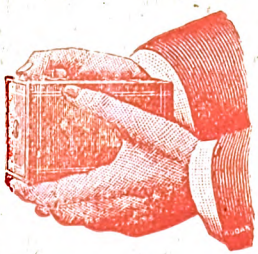

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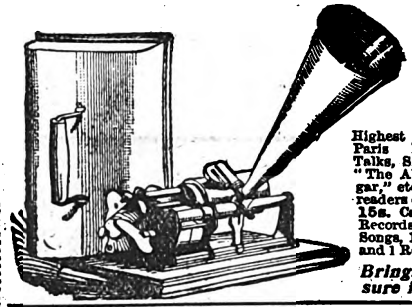

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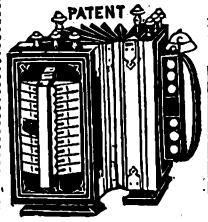

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 682.] For the Week Ending January 25th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

The Lady of the Island.

CHAPTER I.

A Singular Predicament.

"EXCUSE me, sir, but what might your name be? You'll pardon my asking, but you see it's this way—you're the only passenger by the eight-forty left on the platform, and mine's the only private conveyance left in the lane. So, as I was to meet a gentleman from London, I thought perhaps——"

The inquirer hesitated. He was a sturdy, cheerful fellow, in a blue livery and black top boots, with buff bands to them. In his deferential tones there was the suspicion of an Irish accent; its insinuating music disarmed the person whom he had addressed, and whose glance had rested almost irritably upon him. Both had been lingering near the exit of the small country station for a long five minutes.

"I am Robert Causton," was the answer, "and I am bound for Swart Island, to Mrs. Valentine Tennant's place there. I understood that a dog-cart was to meet the express."

"Dear, dear, sir," responded the other, "it's a turble mix, to be sure, for the dog-cart cast a tyre, and I brought the phæton instead. And it was an elderly gentleman I had to fetch, and you're what—saving your presence, sir—many of us'd give a deal to be once more; that's about seven-and-twenty, sir."

"I come in my father's place," said Causton, briefly. "I have just this kit-bag," he added, "and I telegraphed that I would be with Mrs. Tennant at nine o'clock."

"Quite so, sir," assented the Irishman, taking the article in question, "and you'll be meaning it's nigh that now. But you couldn't have done it at the best, for the drive to the Island'll cost fifteen minutes, and the train was late. However, sir, I'll do my utmost with the cattle, and they're not bad bits of blood, either."

He piloted the visitor out of the white-painted wicket that opened from the platform, and slung his burden into the rumble of a tall phæton that was harnessed to a pair of gaunt but powerful bays, held by a lounger. A moment afterwards the vehicle was spinning down the soft macadam road, between thick and dewy hedges, in the direction of the sea, which lay athwart its extremity like a pale-grey ribbon. The evening had descended, but the autumn air was clear and mild.

"How is Mrs. Tennant?" queried Robert Causton, rousing from a thoughtful contemplation of the quiet prospect.

"Worse, sir," he was told—and the driver whipped up his horses, lending an unconscious emphasis to his report—"she's failing fast. Not but what they're keeping it from Miss Delia, poor child."

The Irishman steadied the bays as they crossed a strip of wild fore-shore, gained the sandy flats of the beach, and turned to the obscure and purple horizon.

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When they had settled into their stride again, he glanced at the clean-shaven, impassive face beside him. It expressed no surprise.

"The Island lays off round the head yonder," he vouchsafed; "we can manage a couple of journeys betwixt tides, if we start with the water to the beasts' fetlocks. I've got back with it to their knees, sir."

He chirrupped encouragingly, and the pair started into a quick trot, notwithstanding the heavy nature of the substance upon which they had been guided, and the twinkling lights of the coast began rapidly to diminish. Soon the phæton escaped from the eclipsing bulk of the great promontory on the left, and a yellow point appeared in front, low, steady, yet far-off."

"That's the Island, sir," explained his cicerone; "but it's tricky going hereabout, we daren't run a straight course on account of the quicksands."

Causton shaded his brows and peered into the dusk. Lawyer as he was, the singularity of his surroundings stirred in him an unusual instinct of romance—the distant sigh of the ocean, the glimmer of an occasional star in the sky flooded with the silver radiance of the risen moon, the fresh salt breath that blew upon his stalwart figure—set him wondering if he were the victim of some fantastic dream, or whether his prosaic office in Lincoln's Inn Fields—yes, even the Fields themselves and the noisy, fretful metropolis about them—were not rather the dream, and this dim world of peace and invigorating breezes the reality.

The Irishman broke into his reverie. "The tide's making turble hasty," he said; "hark to that!"

"That" was the splash of the horses' hoofs in the thin sheet of water which had crept up over the wide, level shore. The luminous point on the Island had apparently swung through an arc of ninety degrees, making the change in the route followed by the phæton, and now gleamed well to their right. The moon had been clouded over unnoticed, and the carriage-lamps threw a twin-halo on the rippling expanse of shallow sea.

A lash at the bays sent them flying forward, swerving as if to reach more directly the faint index of their destination. A hundred yards they went, and then the off-horse plunged and reared, sending a shower of scattered brine into the phæton.

"St. Patrick!" muttered the driver, "we've come too westerly, the beasts are off the ridge, there's two foot under us, sir, we'll have to dodge back a bit."

The creatures answered the reins readily enough, but the tide was flowing on every hand; the horse that had so narrowly escaped a fall jibbed, shivered noisily, and screamed—a shrill and tremulous cry of fear. Its companion shied and hung against the pole; the phæton halted in the waste of water.

"Can ye swim, sir?" observed the Irishman coolly.

Robert Causton assented.

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"Then I'm thinking you'll have to get the rest of the way yourself," he was informed. "I'll stop with the horses, sir, it's not Michael Dowd as would leave the poor brutes he's steered to their death. I'm a clumsy fool, I am, and I'll do my penance for it."

"Nonsense!" retorted the young lawyer, making ready to leave the phæton; "besides, you must guide me ashore."

"Make for the beacon, sir," said Michael Dowd obstinately; "the beach is gravel and no rocks foreninst the light. Give my service to Miss Delia, sir."

Causton, unheeding the advice and the request, stooped over the splash board of the phæton and detached the traces.

"Climb across and rid them of the saddles," he ordered; "they know you. And then you can slip the chains, we must drive them, if they won't stand us mounting."

The Irishman raised a joyous whoop and did as he was bidden. "It's yourself that's the real genius, sir," he called from the withers of the near bay. He was unbuckling girths, freeing collar-irons, and shortening reins.

Meanwhile the swift tide sobbed and gurgled through the carriage wheels, the wavelets were above the hubs, and once the phæton lifted to a roller. Behind were the cluster of luminous sparks that indicated the position of the village; before, the beacon of the Island. All else was vast, windy, and indistinct.

A new sound floated abruptly to the lawyer's ears—the unmistakable lap of divided water under a boat's bows. A novel danger was threatening them, that of being run down. Robert Causton caught up a carriage-lamp and held it high in the direction of the peril. A rattle was heard and a black shadow, monstrous and swaying in the gloom, lessened. A lug sail had been allowed to fall; the low hull and squat mast forged onward, into the glow of the lamp supported by the lawyer.

"By St. Patrick!" yelled the driver of the phæton, "but it's Miss Delia. Heaven be praised."

Robert Causton strained his vision to penetrate the night. He could indeed distinguish that the craft which had approached them was a small fishing coble, impelled by the flapping peak of its half lowered mainsail, and controlled by a feminine figure in abbreviated skirts and a big hat. An arch voice reached them, musical in its suppressed excitement:

"Hullo, Michael!" it said; "sit tight—I'm coming."

The coble glided nearer, the steerswoman skipped over the ballast, dragged down the gaff of the lug, threw out a rusty anchor, and hauled on it. The boat stayed a few inches from the now buoyant phæton and its frightened horses.

The rescuer was some twenty years of age, slight, but graceful, and active. Her dark hair was tumbling from its pins, disarranged by her exertions, and her eyes shone.

"Jump in," she commanded, but checked herself to exclaim: "Oh, the poor gee-gees—I had forgotten them."

Robert Causton raised his neat brown bowler with a grave formality; he had managed to retain that article, despite the excitement.

"They will swim at the stern of the boat," he said; "we were going to try and get them back in some such fashion."

"By Jove!" ejaculated the girl crisply; "so Michael didn't quite lose his head—I'm glad of it."

"'Twasn't my notion, Miss Delia," said the Irishman; "my idea was just to drown with the beasts while Mr. Causton swam back alone."

Delia laughed, she was tethering the bays to the rear of the coble. "If you were as clever as you're plucky, Michael," she remarked, "you'd be a marvel. Come on, the phæton must shift for itself."

Michael Dowd flung in the solicitor's kit-bag and stood aside to let him enter the boat. Causton delivered the carriage-lamp to the Irishman, sprang in over the gunwale, and commenced to loose the anchor chain thwart to which it was secured.

"We'll take a turn or two of this round the body of the phæton," he decided, measuring the small coble with a keen scrutiny, "it can be hauled up to morrow not much the worse, except the stuffing."

"That's a smart dodge," commented the person whom Michael Dowd had addressed as Miss Delia. She was leaning against the mast, and the pose showed to advantage the supple youth of her figure and the proud unconsciousness of her expression.

The device, thus indorsed, was acted on. The carriage, fastened to the anchor of the coble, was temporarily abandoned, the mainsail was hoisted and the little craft, with the horses swimming astern, bore down upon the Island. Ten minutes had scarcely elapsed when she grounded in a sheltered cove, and the bays shook themselves free of the unfamiliar element.

As Michael Dowd improvised a new mooring for the coble, the lawyer, who had made himself responsible for the custody of the horses, turned to his rescuer. "I am Robert Causton," he said, "of London, and Mrs. Tennant's solicitor. Please accept my thanks for the obligation under which you have laid me. May I not know to whom I am indebted?"

The girl smiled; Robert Causton was holding the carriage-lamp they had brought with them, and thought he had never seen a smile at once so mischievous and so gay.

"I—I am Delia Tennant," she rejoined; "and, oh, won't I get into a row for this!"

With which unexpected announcement she flitted away and was lost in the prevailing obscurity.

CHAPTER II.

Robert Causton's Morning

"I TRUST, sir, you have slept well, though the wind did get up about dawn—doubtless you are not accustomed to the sound of the sea."

The solicitor bowed to the maker of this stiffly polite observation. She was angular, self-possessed, high-nosed, and wore a severe gown of black alpaca. Robert Causton himself had risen on her appearance in the small yet pleasant room where he had been breakfasting. The chill, characteristic sunshine of an autumn forenoon flooded the apartment, and shone on the silver plate and trim damask before him. From the window at his elbow he could see the little cove where he had disembarked the previous evening. Across a blue sheet of water—for the tide was nearly full again—was the coast of the Bristol Channel, and the picturesque village of Fawlish.

"Thank you, I spent a most comfortable night," he said, "but tempered by some anxiety about my client. Is she—is she any better?"

The housekeeper folded her arms and sighed. "There are some tokens of a rally," she told him, "or so Dr. Philpot thinks. But in cancer, Mr. Causton, and at

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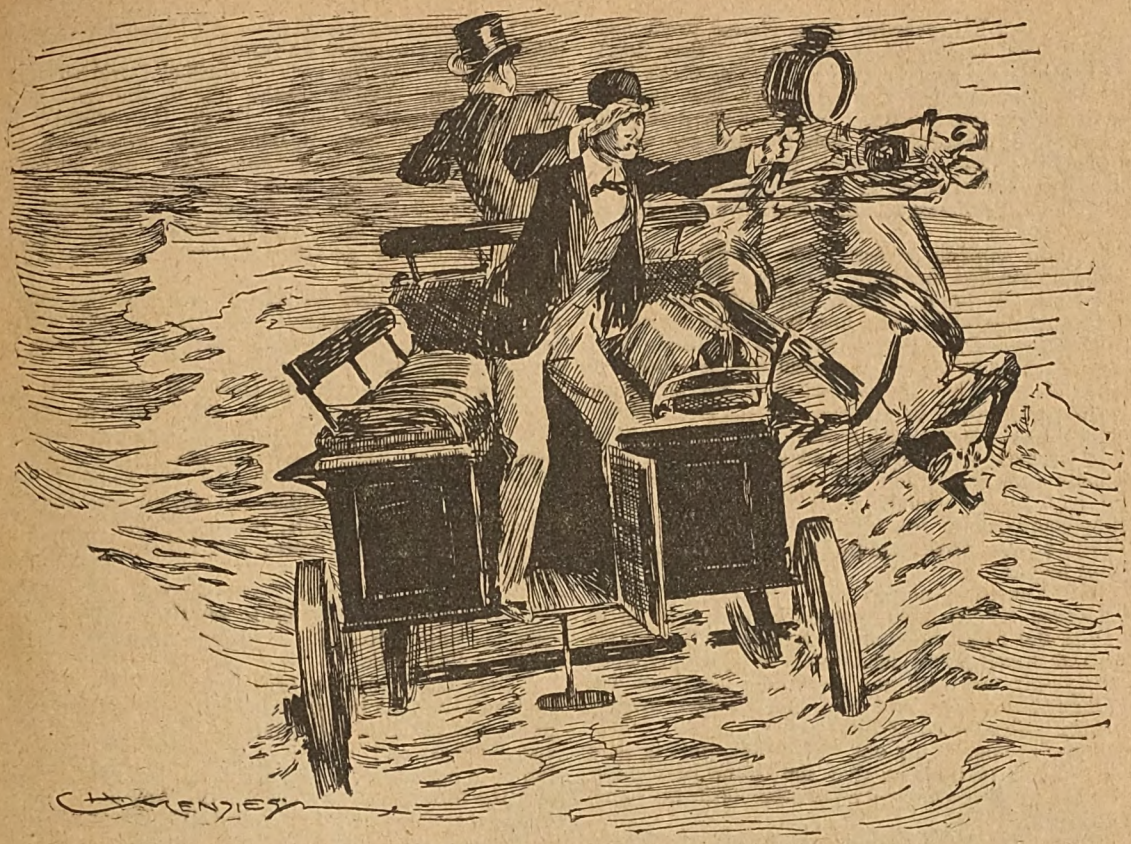

Robert Causton caught up a carriage lamp and held it high in the direction of the peril.

this stage, hope is a delusion. That is why you were sent for—or rather your father was, since Mrs. Tennant was not, and is not so far, aware of his death. Pray be seated, sir, and go on with your breakfast, I only looked in to make sure it was to your liking."

Robert Causton sank back upon his chair, fidgeting with a heavy pencil case; he had been scribbling notes on one and another of a sheaf of documents. "A—a moment, Miss—Miss——" he began, and paused uncertainly.

"Royle is my name, sir," said the housekeeper, "Naomi Royle. It was well known to your father, sir; I've been on Swart Island with Mrs. Tennant a matter of—of nineteen year, I helped her to nurse her first and only child, which was a mite nobody expected to live."

"A long, and I am sure, an honourable service," declared the solicitor courteously. "Pardon me, Miss Royle, if I remind you that I am a busy professional man. My father's decease has inundated me with work, and I should be in town for an important consultation to-day. Can I not run up and return when your patient has rallied sufficiently to receive me?"

Naomi Royle lifted her hands in dismay. "Don't dream of it, sir," she begged; "Mrs. Tennant might slip away at any moment. Dr. Philpot says she mustn't see you for some hours at least, or she will collapse without doing as she wishes. She is only reconciled to the delay by the understanding that you are in the house, and by the doctor's assurance that she is nearing a rally. If I may be so free, sir, I should wish to add that expense is no object, and that what inconvenience we put you to must be reckoned with. Dowd will take letters or telegrams for you to Fawlish, when the tide is in, by trap, and at other times by boat."

Robert Causton resigned himself to the inevitable. "I suppose the horses were none the worse for their adventure," he remarked.

"No, sir," allowed the housekeeper, "which is a blessing, poor creatures—we are indebted to you, sir, for saving them, it seems Dowd clean lost his wits."

"It was not I who brought off the rescue," demurred the lawyer, finishing his cup of tea, "but Miss Tennant. By-the-bye, how is she?"

Miss Royle's harsh features became harsher still, and she moved hurriedly towards the door. "Well, I thank you, sir," she said; "you will please make yourself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The Island," she added, pausing after thus unceremoniously changing the subject, "is not large, but you may care to explore it, and there is a boat, sailed by a fisherman who farms a few acres near us. He would be glad to show you round the coast. Good morning, sir."

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Causton raised his eyebrows when Naomi Royle had departed. "By Jupiter!" he muttered, "they don't want me to ask questions about Miss Delia, that's flat. Now I recollect, she said she would get into trouble over that affair last evening. She was as pretty as a picture in the lamplight; I wonder what she would be in the day. Anyhow, she must have sense to understand the danger involved in the wrong trend of the phæton lamps, and pluck, to come off alone in that heavy boat."

He got up, musing, collected his papers, went for his hat, and strolled out on to the lawn which sloped, unfenced, to the beach. From this point the house on the Island was visible as a low, straggling residence, stoutly built and cleverly sheltered. In the sandy bay, beyond the shingle, the fishing-coble was grounded at the edge of the tide. He noticed that she had been anchored, and, judged by the fact and the fresh wheel-marks on the shore, that the phæton had been brought back, in the early morning, from its singular position.

Casually enough, he lounged over to the boat and peered in. To his surprise he beheld, seated on the flooring boards, with her feet tucked under her, and absorbed in the disentangling of a line, Miss Delia Tennant herself.

Robert Causton saluted her respectfully. His acquaintance of the preceding night had nothing to fear from the fuller radiance of the day. Her ample locks and hazel pupils lent force to a countenance peculiarly soft, mirthful and feminine; her dress was short-skirted and plain, and a big blue pinafore covered the whole. She smiled at him archly.

"So you've found me out," she said, pulling at a knot; "please take notice that the blame isn't mine. If you wish to talk to me you must come inside or Naomi will spot you."

A trifle astonished by this frankness, the young solicitor mounted to the coble and paused, regarding her.

Delia made a gesture towards the stern-sheets. "You'll have to plump down," she warned him; "you're not hidden there, you know."

Causton obeyed her curt directions, and picking up a skein of the line, commenced to straighten it. "Do you mind telling me," he queried calmly, "why I have to conduct this interview *sub rosa*, so to speak?"

"*Sub rosa!*" repeated Miss Tennant, poring over an obstinate snarl of hemp; "yes, it's in the end of the dictionary, isn't it, and means on the sly? Well, because I'm being brought up properly, and no girl can be brought up properly who has men running after her. Naomi says so."

"Do men run after you?" asked the solicitor, piqued.

The other considered. "I'm not certain," she said, "they might if they had the chance. But you can't imagine what Naomi is; every second I'm expecting her head to pop up over that gunwale, and to have to go to my room for the rest of the morning. While you, you would simply be ordered off the Island."

Robert Causton laughed; the child-woman, with her imperious ways, her crisp speech, and her dazzling candour, interested him.

"Such cases have occurred before then?" he demanded.

Delia blushed. "Once," she faltered; "he was an engineer—we were having a reservoir built, with a pump for our drinking water. I didn't like him a bit, but I wanted to tease Naomi. If I had cared for him, I should have run away with him—if he had asked me to."

"You—you read novels, of course," ventured Causton, twisting the line about its frame.

"Rather," said the girl. "Michael Dowd smuggles them for me. I've a regular pile in the cave under the hill, 'Ivanhoe,' and 'David Copperfield' (he ran away with Dora Spenlow, you remember), and 'Jane Eyre.' Oh, isn't 'Jane Eyre' the darlingist tale! Would you like to see my books?" she added impulsively, but checked herself. "I'm sorry," she supplemented, "I can't show you them now, not that it matters, I could go through them by heart—I've a very good memory."

"I should be glad to learn," confessed the lawyer, out of his own thoughts, "how you got this clumsy boat off yesterday evening—are your muscles as exceptional as your memory?"

A ripple of merriment answered him. "It was just afloat," said Delia, "the tide comes in quickly at the Island—the shore shelves and the currents are rapid. The moment I saw the phæton lights—we're used to watching for them—pass the bend, I knew Dowd had missed the ridge and slipped into the deep channel. So I cast adrift, rowed off, and hoisted the lug—there was a nice breeze, and I fetched you on the third tack."

"You acted promptly," commented the solicitor, "I can hardly decide which to admire more, your coolness or your dispatch. I suppose, though, you are familiar with boats."

"Only this," replied Delia Tennant, "it's old Amos Godson's—he has fished about Swart Island for years; we let him set night-lines from the rocks, and he delivers our messages and stores. I often sail her myself off the cove here when Amos is on his little farm, Dowd says the fishermen about call me the Lady of the Island. It's mother that ought to be called that, but then they've never seen her—when she drives out it's always in a closed brougham. Oh," she cried, "you're a lawyer, aren't you?"

"I am," assented Causton, "that is, to be exact, a solicitor. My father was your mother's lawyer when I was a lad at Eton. Now he is dead, and I am the principal partner."

Delia clasped her hands over her knees. "You are going to do something about mamma's will," she said; "don't people usually make wills when they're expecting to die?"

Robert Causton hesitated. "Sometimes," he rejoined, "by no means usually."

Miss Tennant nodded, appreciating the distinction. "Then my mother isn't—isn't very ill," she interpreted. "Oh, Mr. Causton, I am glad, I have been dreadfully afraid she was. Dr. Philpot and Naomi put me off, but you wouldn't deceive me, I can read it in your face that you are honest."

The young lawyer hesitated. "You—you asked me a general question," he objected, "and I answered it truthfully." Causton caught himself wondering *why* the idea of deceiving her was so repugnant to him. "Your mother," he pursued, "is, I regret to admit, gravely unwell, but everyone hopes for the best."

Delia's lip trembled and her lashes grew wet. "I was right," she said, "you haven't cheated me with a stupid lie, it was Dr. Philpot and Naomi who did that. I—I understand you, my—my mother is dying."

She dashed her sunburnt palms to her eyes, and her head drooped. Causton comtemplated her piteous figure, and an inexplicable emotion stirred in his breast.

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Suddenly a bird-like cry arose on the air—thrice it was reiterated and thrice it faded into silence. Delia sprang up, shaking the tears from her lashes.

"I must go," she told him; "I have stayed out too long—I'm—I'm not sorry I met you, Mr. Causton, you've let me know the truth about mamma. They've been treating me as if I were a baby."

She extended her hand, and the solicitor grasped it warmly. "Don't misunderstand me," he murmured, "your mother is seriously ill, but she is on the verge of a rally. She may live for a year, for two years, even more. I have no justification for explaining these things to you, but you are, as you say, a woman, and you have proved yourself a brave one."

Delia Tennant glanced up at him quickly, and the colour throbbed in her cheeks. But she did not answer except by that mute gaze and girlish flush, and leaping on to a thwart of the boat, jumped down and hurried off. She had not crossed to the house, the bird-like cry had been heard again, and Delia, hastening her steps, flitted up a narrow path that ascended the cliff.

The triple cry lingered on the young lawyer's ear; it might have passed for that of a gull, but there was a tremulous inflection in it that suggested the human mimic. Why had it so abruptly withdrawn Delia Tennant from his side. Robert Causton, though he would have been the last to own the fact, became profoundly curious. The sensation was mingled with a spice of unconscious jealousy. He stalked out of the coble, and traversing the beach, took to a higher level of the hill than that trodden by Delia.

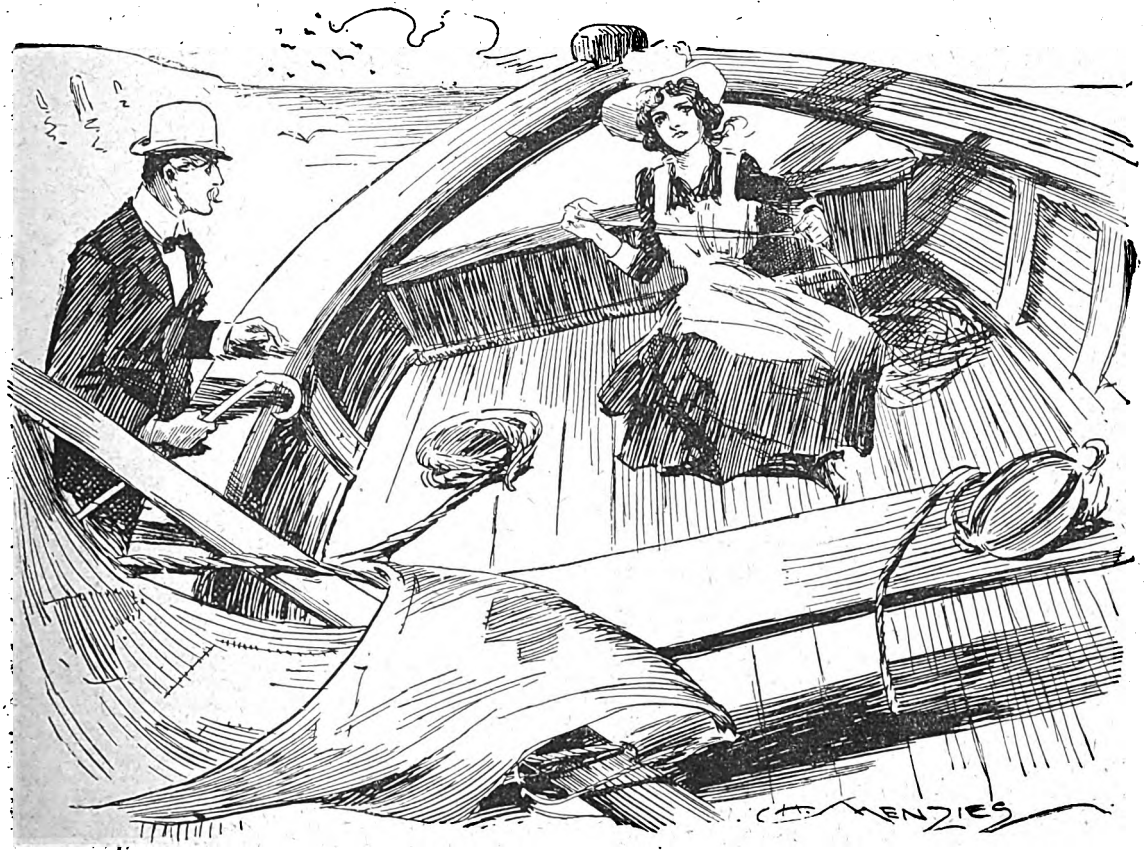
Slowly he gained the rough promontory forming the most distinctive characteristic of the Island on its inner coast. It was green to the edge, which fell away in jagged stairs, patched with occasional turf and mountain immortelles.

From an eminence of the lofty cape, yet screened by a taller rock, Causton reconnoitred the position, to perceive Delia on the very brink of the abyss, her blue pinafore and flapping hat tossed by the wind, while their wearer was engaging in conversation with a person who occupied a scarcely less dangerous nook of the precipice. This latter was a man, tall, grey-haired, stooping, and shabbily clad.

As the solicitor completed his survey Delia moved backwards, and both she and her companion vanished as utterly as if they had never existed.

A shiver crept over Robert Causton, but he recollected Delia's words, "the cave under the hill." She had offered to take him thither, and had instantly cancelled her invitation. Was that grey-haired, stooping personage the cause of her retreat from the proposal?

Causton stared at the giddy descent, mechanically preparing a cigarette for lighting. The match in his fingers halted, unstruck! Below him a head and shoulders emerged above a shallow rampart of stone. The



"So you've found me out?" she said, pulling at a knot. "Please take notice that the blame isn't mine."

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face was visible, and the lawyer had recognised it—it was that of a well-known London detective, and he was peering in the direction of the spot where the girl and the man had disappeared.

Robert Causton shrank more closely into the species of recess which screened him. His mind was busy with conjecture. But ere he could form a definite statement of the problem that had presented itself, Delia reappeared and glided up the slope. At sight of her, the figure, which the solicitor's professional experience had enabled him to recognise, ducked, and became invisible.

Ignorant of the double espionage that had been maintained upon her, Delia hurried by Causton's place of concealment. He darted after her, shielding himself dexterously from the possible view of the detective. If there were anything in progress demanding the attention of the authorities, it behoved him to act with caution.

Overtaking Miss Delia Tennant, he called to her in a whisper. She turned and a look of disdain thinned her features.

"Mr. Causton," she said coldly, "you've—you've been spying on me. And I thought you were a gentleman."

The lawyer winced. "My curiosity is the measure of my interest in you, Miss Tennant," he responded firmly; "in any case it may be worth mentioning that I was not the only witness of your proceedings, and those of your companion. At the back of that huge boulder there lies hidden a certain Samuel Bevan, a smart detective officer from London, and well known to almost every lawyer in the metropolis. You yourself will judge if the information has any bearing on your objection to my—my spying."

Delia caught at his arm. "Oh," she gasped, "forgive me; it wasn't my secret, or I would have trusted you, I would, indeed. We must tell Naomi, quickly, she will decide what to do."

Robert Causton paused. "Had I not better keep an eye on Master Bevan?" he suggested.

"No, no!" retorted Delia, "nobody could ever find the cave under the hill without they were shown it. But Naomi must be told immediately."

The solicitor yielded to her impatience, they scrambled down the steep path together, and entered the house at the head of the tiny bay.

Miss Naomi Royle met them in the hall. "Mr. Causton," she said, "I was about to send in search of you. Will you come to Mrs. Tennant's room at once? I have explained to her that you have taken your father's place. Be quiet and rapid, as she is very weak, Dr. Philpot is with her."

She led the way to a door on an upper landing. Delia followed them, awed by the housekeeper's haggard visage, yet eager to make her momentous communication.

As the solicitor passed into the sick chamber Delia drew Naomi Royle back, and whispered to her excitedly.

CHAPTER III.
The End of the Day.

"ALL else that I die possessed of to my dear daughter, Delia Tennant, especially the long lease of Swart Island and the house on it. And I charge her to continue, as, indeed, I know she will, the payment I have made for so many years towards a charitable object, the nature of which she has lately learnt."

Robert Causton finished reading the formal sentences.

"And the executors?" he said, glancing at the white countenance on the pillow hard by. The sick woman turned her head and parted her dry lips.

"Naomi Royle," she murmured, "and—and—" She put out a frail hand and pushed at the shade of the lamp, so that its rays fell on the features of the young solicitor. "And yourself," she said, then collapsed upon the tumbled bed.

The lawyer wrote down the necessary phrases and rose, with his pen in his hand. But another figure had stepped to the side of the couch—that of a grave, well proportioned man, in the prime of life.

"One moment, Mr. Causton," he whispered, and touched the thin wrist on the counterpane. His brows knitted, he poured out some brandy into a medicine cup, and slipped the mouthpiece between his patient's lips.

"Open the window," he requested curtly, "and ring to hasten Miss Royle. You must be quick or the will may go unsigned."

Causton acted on the double instruction. As he threw up the sash he realised suddenly that the obtaining of her final directions from the dying woman had cost hours. The tide was full again, and the moon high in the heavens. In the azure strait that separated Swart Island and the coast of Devonshire rode a steamer—a long, black cargo-boat, strangely out of place in that open and unfrequented anchorage. On the beach beneath, the fishing coble swayed to the wavelets, its sails loose, its keel half-grounded. By her floated a small pair-oar boat.

A moment later, Robert Causton had pulled the bell-cord and a firm step in the passage without betokened the approach of Naomi herself. Additional footsteps neared the threshold—a light and a heavy one. They were those of Delia Tennant and the Irish coachman, Michael Dowd. The three entered, to perceive that the doctor had raised his patient skilfully, her emaciated form was supported against his shoulder.

"Now, Mr. Causton," he said significantly. The lawyer slipped the pen into the fingers of the dying woman and the sunken lids opened. The pupils under were clear and comprehending.

"You sign this, Mrs. Tennant," queried Robert Causton distinctly, "as your last will and testament?"

"I do," faltered his client, and the syllables were scarcely heard in the silence of the room. But she scrawled her name at the bottom of the document with a determined effort that brought the beaded sweat to her cheeks and forehead. The physician laid her down gently, and administered another mouthful of brandy.

Robert Causton was obtaining the signatures of the witnesses, Naomi supplied hers, calm and resolute as ever. But the Irishman's face was wet with tears.

"You will leave Mrs. Tennant to me now, gentlemen," said the housekeeper, dismissing Michael Dowd by means of a peremptory gesture, and turning almost haughtily to the others. "She has one more person to see before she can die in peace."

She threw wide the door and the solicitor strode towards it. He paused, to look about for Delia. She had disappeared. The doctor had stayed for a word with Naomi, he caught up the young lawyer, and they went out together. In the corridor Delia passed them—she was leading a person clad in a dark overcoat, and wearing a soft hat pulled down on to his brows. But Robert Causton had a glimpse of loose grey locks and knew her companion was the same that he

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had seen in conversation with her upon the cliff. Before he could complete his scrutiny, the latch clicked and he was alone in the corridor with the doctor.

The physician held out his hand. "Good-night, Mr. Causton," he observed, "it is no use my remaining, she will drift away about midnight or earlier. Poor soul, hers has been a sad life and yet her daughter will miss her. You and I," he continued, feeling for his gloves and drawing them on, "could read between the lines of all this if we chose, but it would not be wise to recognise the act, even though we are professional men, and must preserve out client's secrets. *Au revoir*, I have a boat and an oarsman in the cove, and there are patients in Fawlish whom I can help."

He nodded cheerfully, and stalked off down the corridor. Robert Causton gasped. Suddenly a gleam of comprehension broke in upon him. There must have been some scandal in the Tennant family, which his father and the grave medical man who had just left him had been acquainted with. Such scandals are not always committed to writing in lawyers' offices, and the elder Causton had died without confiding this to his son. No doubt the latter was supposed by his client to understand precisely that which, as it was, he could only guess at.

But what could be the nature of the scandal, what the reason for Mrs. Tennant's so singularly postponing the preparation of her will, what the identity of that disguised figure at present with the dying woman, what the cause of a detective's secret visit to the Island? The solicitor exhausted himself in speculations; but the thought of Delia Tennant dominated them all.

Thus musing, Robert Causton strode to the extremity of the corridor, where an oriel window commanded the cove below. Here he stood for some while, and then a footfall in the passage at his back made him face about. It was Naomi Royle and the mysterious unknown. Not noticing him they hastened down the curving staircase—soon he saw them emerge upon the beach and move towards the fishing-coble at the water's edge. The little craft was floating in the wash of the tide.

They entered its black shadow, yet he could discern that Naomi had halted, while her companion had pressed on, wading knee-deep. A dark shape aided him into the boat, the lug-sail crawled up the mast, the canvas bellied to the wind, and the boat crept from the shore. The housekeeper watched it steadily as it stole forth upon the rippling strait. Ten minutes after it had glided to the lean cargo-steamer that lay off the Island.

The two vessels blended their shadows for a time, and then the coble slid astern, the steamer, forging ahead, gathered way, and faded in the night. Naomi Royle abandoned her post and came towards the house.

When Causton heard her foot once more upon the stair he changed his position to bar her passage. She glanced up and he could tell that under her iron exterior some powerful emotion was fighting with her reserve.

"What is the purport of all this?" he asked abruptly. "I am a lawyer, Miss Royle, and there is such a thing as becoming an accessory after the fact. As Miss Tennant will have told you, a detective is in hiding on the Island. Of whom is he in search?"

Naomi Royle answered him harshly, but her voice trembled. "Of Valentine Tennant," she said, "fratricide and outlaw, who has looked his last on a dying wife and an only child. Fifteen years ago he killed his brother, out of jealousy for a young and flighty wife, who, nevertheless, loved him dearly. He fled the country, was outlawed, and his estates forfeited. But his wife knew herself to blame, and would not will her own property away from him, until she realised that it was necessary for Delia's sake."

The housekeeper glanced from the window, the cargo-steamer had vanished utterly.

"We have always been aware of his hiding-place abroad," she pursued, "and lately we wrote him that Mrs. Tennant was dying. He swore to come home and see her, if he should be hanged for it. Once here, he convinced Mrs. Tennant that if she did not will her fortune and the lease of the Island to Miss Delia, they would pass to him, and be forfeit to the Crown. Now you understand everything, Mr. Causton, but the law cannot touch you, for Valentine Tennant is no longer within your reach or mine."

She stepped by him—determinedly rather than hastily—and went along the corridor. As she neared the sick-room there was a low cry from its interior—a piteous, girlish cry, and the sound of a fall.

Naomi sprang in and darted to the bedside—her mistress' jaw had settled into the last grim position and Delia lay insensible on the floor.

* * * *

The next day Robert Causton returned to London, to devote a few breathless hours to the interests of his neglected clients before retracing his steps to the West Coast, to arrange for the administration of the late Mrs. Tennant's estate. Glancing down an evening paper in his club the same night, he discovered a startling paragraph:

> "The body of Mr. Samuel Bevan, a distinguished member of the Scotland Yard detective establishment, was found this afternoon among the rocks on Swart Island, off the Devon coast. It is supposed that the deceased officer was exploring this romantic spot, when he lost his footing and fell from the cliffs. Oddly enough, the owner of the Island, which is private property, died last night."

And this is how it comes to pass that the real route to the cave under the hill, where Valentine Tennant was concealed during his dangerous visit to England—a visit which, by some means, had reached the ears of the police, is unknown to any but Delia Tennant, Naomi Royle, and Robert Causton. Delia herself showed it to the last-named on one of his frequent little holidays at the house on Swart Island—holidays that ended ultimately in his becoming to some extent a proprietor of this piece of British territory. That is if a man can be said to share his wife's property in the long lease of an Island.

As for Valentine Tennant, during many years a certain sum per annum was remitted by Delia Causton to a banker in the Argentine "for an agreed purpose." At length the banker wrote that the "beneficiare" no longer called for the amounts. Then it was that Delia told her husband, what he had always guessed, that it had been paid for her father, and that he was now dead.

When, in the course of time, the present possessors of Swart Island pass away, the secret of a very curious hiding-place will die with them. Should it itself ever be recovered, it is doubtful whether the chief feature of the "cave under the hill" will be ascertained. This is its second exit, a funnel-shaped air-hole traversable by an agile climber. It was through the aperture in question that Valentine Tennant escaped to his wife's death-bed, notwithstanding the vigilance of the luckless Mr. Samuel Bevan. R. NORMAN SILVER.

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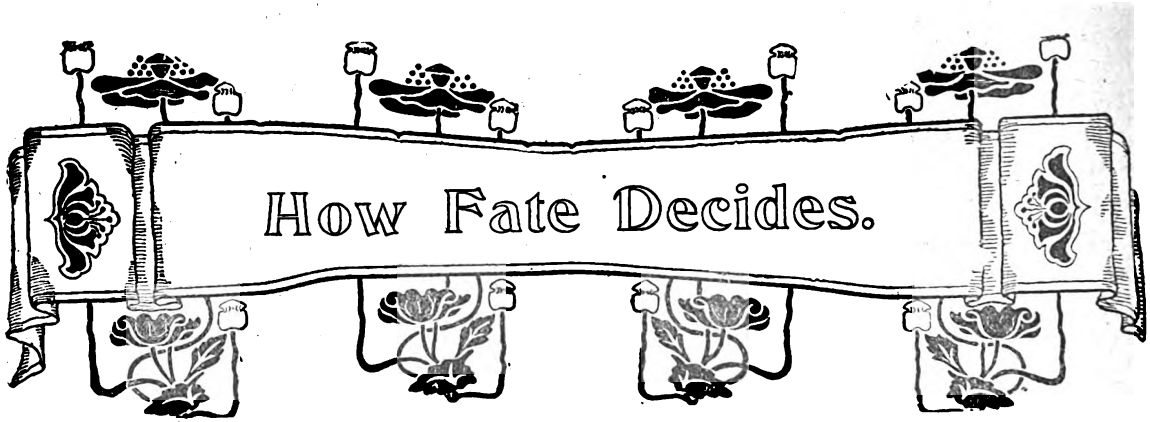

"I PARTICULARLY desire, Kate, that this may be the last experiment of the kind that you will try."

George Germond spoke gravely, with a deep line between his brows, and his lips formed into a cold, stern line. Kate Brewster tossed her pretty head.

"There's no occasion for your being so cross about it, George," said she. "It's only a frolic."

"A pretty frolic to walk deliberately into a room full of men in the disguise of an orange girl, selling oranges."

"Well, what then? Weren't my oranges good?"

"Kate, do you want to drive me frantic?" expostulated the aggrieved lover.

"Well, go on with your lecture."

"Answer me—do you think it was a ladylike or a dignified thing to do?"

"N—not exactly," faltered poor Kate, while Mr. Germond gloomed down upon her like an avenging genius.

"I wish it to be distinctly understood," he went on, "that if our engagement is to proceed—if, I say—you are to pledge me your solemn word of honour never again to let yourself be drawn into any of this absurd masquerading."

Kate's colour deepened, and her eyes flashed ominously.

"I do not choose to bind myself by any promise, George Germond," said she. "It was only a freak of mine to pass myself off on you and your cousins, and Henry St. John, as an orange vendor. You—none of you—would ever have suspected my identity if I had not told you afterwards."

"You will not promise, Kate?"

"No. I will not promise. If you cannot trust me without——"

"Exactly," hotly interrupted Germond. "I cannot trust you. You have spoken well."

"Then we had better part."

"Now, Kate, don't be so unreasonable. You know that I love you—you know that I have only your best interests at heart. This mania for acting will surely, sooner or later, bring you to grief. Promise me, darling, that you will give it up. Promise me not to take part in Mrs. Synclare's theatricals next month."

"Never!" was Kate's spirited reply.

"Very well," said Germond, deeply offended. "Then you know the consequences."

"That is just as you please."

And she courtesied him imperially out of the room.

"So let it be!" she cried, dashing the briny drops out of her eyes. "I will not cramp the royal gifts God has given me to suit the narrow ideas of any man alive. I feel that I can merge myself entirely in the identities of the creatures of other geniuses—and I am determined, sooner or later, to go on the stage. I fancied I loved him, but I could never thoroughly respect a man whose soul ran in such despicably narrow grooves!"

People shook their heads when Kate Brewster resigned her situation in a flourishing academy for young ladies, and accepted a fourth-rate opportunity to go on the stage during the engagement of a star actress.

"I have only to walk on and off, and say four or five words, mamma," pleaded Kate; "and I have such a good chance to study Mrs. Legrange!"

"But, my love, this can only end in disappointment and distaste for ordinary occupations!"

"You'll see, mamma," said Kate, brightly.

"If you had been a sensible girl and married young Germond——!"

"I should have felt like a caged bird all my days! Only wait, mamma; only wait and see!"

Mrs. Legrange, the beautiful English actress, had the rare perceptions belonging to her sex. Among all the "subs" she saw and noticed the dark-eyed girl with the square brow, and the red, mobile mouth.

"That girl has the making of an artist in her," said she; "bring her to me."

And the upshot of the matter was, that when Mrs. Legrange went back to London, Kate Brewster and her mother went, too.

Years afterwards the denizens of her native town never knew that Katherine Bruce, the brilliant young tragedienne, who was nightly playing to such full houses, was the Kate Brewster who had once been a schoolmistress in their midst.

* * * * *

"George Germond! ill and in trouble? I used to know a George Germond!"

Miss Bruce spoke impetuously. A circle of literary and dramatic connoisseurs were sitting in her private sitting-room at the Valentia Hotel. Mrs. Brewster, in black satin and valenciennes lace, presided at the tea urn, and looked with admiring eyes at the royally-beautiful woman into which her young daughter had blossomed during the last ten years.

Kate herself, in a deep blue silk, with draperies of black lace and a diamond cross sparkling at her throat stood by the marble mantel in an attitude unconsciously graceful.

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"He's managed his business affairs poorly," said Mrs. Rosser. "Everything has gone wrong, and his wife, a poor, little helpless thing, with no merit on earth but a pretty face, has helped to drag him down. They say he is nearly wild, threatens to commit suicide, and all that sort of thing!"

"Oh, he mustn't do that," said Kate. "I'll go to see him."

"You, dearest?" remonstrated her mother.

"Yes, mamma; why shouldn't I? Old friends ought to be the first to help one another, and I've long ago given up those silly scruples which draw so impassable a barrier between a girl and her old lover. I'll go to-morrow."

* * * * *

"A lady to see me! I don't want to see anyone! Tell her so."

George Germond spoke hoarsely, and in the same instant he pushed a loaded revolver under the folds of the table-cover, but the visitor followed too closely on the footsteps of the scared little servant-maid to admit of the message of denial being delivered.

She was tall and regal in her mien, but a close black veil concealed her face as she walked directly to the table, and taking up the insufficiently-hidden pistol, flung it out of the window into a cluster of leafless bushes in the garden.

"It is only a coward, George Germond," said she, "who would run away from the troubles of this world rather than face and conquer them."

"Kate Brewster!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said she, laughing, "Kate Brewster, or rather Katherine Bruce, as they call me now."

"Are you, then, Katherine Bruce, the successful actress—the queen of the modern stage? Oh, Kate, I never dreamt of this!"

"But I didn't come here to talk about myself," she said, independently. "It is you that I am interested in. Are you really ruined?"

"Yes." He set his teeth gloomily. "Past help—past recall."

"Will a loan of a thousand pounds help you to regain the lost position?"

"Where am I to get a thousand pounds?"

"I will lend it to you. I have it to spare. I was going to take my lawyer's advice and invest it in mines, but I'm not particular as to its destination. You can have it to-morrow. Now let's see the wife and babies. Don't thank me—thanks are a nuisance. I shall expect fair interest and good security."

Mrs. Germond, a little pallid, fair-haired creature, in the last stages of consumption, lay on a sofa within. She looked up anxiously as Kate swept in.

"If you are another of my husband's creditors—" she began in a trembling voice.

"I am not, but I'm going to be," said Kate. "May I kiss you, my dear? I am a very old friend of your husband's."

So the young actress brought comfort and blessing to the home of poor George Germond. She never told his wife of the pistol, nor did Germond himself ever afterwards allude to it.

Mrs. Germond died in the spring—the burial roses were glowing on her cheeks when Kate first saw her. And according to the rule and plummet of romance, the old lovers ought to have got married when a decent period of mourning had expired.

But they didn't.

Mr. Germond would have been more than pleased with such an arrangement, but Miss Brewster calmly shook her head.

"No," said she, "I shall never marry."

George Germond said nothing, but he thought of how magnificently Kate's life had blossomed and rounded itself out—of how wretched a failure his own had been. And it was in no wise a consolatory reflection that it had been his own fault.

Perhaps, after all, it was as well that George Germond and Kate Brewster never were married. A man does not like to feel that his wife is superior to him, neither is it altogether a pleasant position for a woman to occupy. Fate often arranges things better than we can do.

STEWART LOFTUS.

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THE SNOW-WHITE MARE.

In the valley, about six miles above the forks of the Teton River, in Northern Montana, is the Blackfoot Indian Agency. A high stockade of split logs standing on end, deeply sunk in the earth, incloses about two acres of ground. Heavy gates, opening outward, sway harshly on great iron hinges. A well is in the centre of the inclosure. Low log buildings, covered with earth, are scattered along the stockade.

A couple of sandhill cranes stood expectantly at the well, waiting patiently for a thirsty man to draw water. A white-tailed deer, with a broad blue ribbon on her neck, walked daintily around. Her cool black muzzle, studded with drops of dew, brilliant in the slanting rays of the rising sun, was slyly thrust into my hand, giving me a slight shock of surprise.

By the stables stood a cow moose, standing so awkwardly with crooked legs and humped back, and the pendulous lip which Mark Twain calls "the Hapsburg," that her very ugliness excited my pity. A moose calf —her miniature in ugliness—stood stupidly at her side.

Standing at the well, facing the great Rocky Mountain range, I drew a bucketful of water. Drinking deeply, repulsing the while the advances of the female crane with my moccasined foot, I got the reward of all men who reject the advances of the tender sex, and was soon engaged in repelling a furious advance on me by the long-legged twain. The attack was fierce. Their long hard bills clashed viciously as they scornfully scolded me, and I was on the point of beating a disgraceful retreat, when I heard:

"Ho, Frank; come, have a mouthful of whisky?"

Recognising the voice, I gladly left the cranes in undisputed possession of the water bucket, and walked across the parade to the store of the fur company.

Bidding Burr "Good morning," I declined the whisky on grounds unnecessary to state; yet the barrel had a yellow head, and—and—well, I knew the tap. I sat and talked to Burr, who was in charge of this extensive store, and before breakfast he went over it with me. A curious stock. Everything you could not find in an Eastern country store was here. As we walked he explained the business to me. Alluring? Not at all. He, looking at his watch, said:

"We have yet time before breakfast to look at my mare."

The sudden change in the expression of the voice, the softening of the eyes, as this hard Indian trader spoke of his horse, excited my curiosity, and I went with him. He took me to a low log stable, the chinks carefully mudded, the open shutter and door well made and carefully fitted, so as to exclude the buffalo gnats in season. A few short, heavy chains, stretching from post to post, kept the horse in and the other animals out. With breast pushing against the topmost chain, with her handsome broad head thrust out, and alert ears cocked forward, stood a snow-white mare. She was looking at the moose with a surprised expression on her face, as much as to say: "Well, you have not grown handsomer during the night."

Burr whistled and with a joyful neigh the mare turned her head towards him and bade him welcome. The greeting between man and animal was almost tender. The mare rubbed her nose gently against his breast, and the man stood softly stroking her delicate neck. Unlocking the chains, they dropped. Burr walked towards the well. The mare, with dainty steps, arched neck, and flecking tail, followed him behind, or, caressingly advancing to his side, rubbed her body against his, as though the mere contact with the man was grateful to her. His arm instinctively lifted and dropped across her neck.

The two walked on together, unconscious of any incongruity. A bucket of water stood at the well. The high-bred creature smelt of it, and detecting my previous presence, disdainfully refused to drink after me. Emptying the bucket Burr drew another, and of this the mare drank slowly, her white face gradually sinking into the shallow vessel.

All across the parade, on the return to the stable, the love scene was re-enacted. As they passed me, the mare showed her aversion to a stranger by laying back her ears and thrusting out her white-toothed muzzle towards me in a vicious manner, causing me to step back hastily. They passed into the darkness of the stable. Burr comes out with a bucket, puts up the topmost chain, and goes after barley. The mare, with

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outstretched head, looks after him with kind eyes. Again she saw me, and, with wide-open mouth, reached the post to pay me the attentions of her dislike. Returning to the stable with a full bucket of barley, Burr passed in. I heard him pour the grain into the feed-box; I heard him speak to the mare as his "dear girl," and I heard him—kiss her.

A singular gentleness had come over this hard man, steeled to human suffering and woe, whose business it was to impoverish Indians, to destroy their morals, to brutify them with the fiend, alcohol. He sat at the breakfast table, silently thinking, with his antelope steaks and trout untasted before him. Watching the softened face, I wondered what was the story. So I said:

"Burr, why do you love that white mare?"

He looked kindly at me; and, with a sad smile, replied: "To-night, after the men are in bed, I will tell you the story." Then briskly: "Frank, this is not business. Eat, my boy, then clear out and fish or hunt. You will find some prairie hens in the big willow thicket about five miles below here. I saw them the other day. Shoot some. To-night we will have a feast, and I will open my last two bottles of sherry, and we will talk." His face hardened. The cold, deadly look returned to the grey eyes, and our breakfast was soon finished.

Shouldering my rifle, I stepped out of the stockade and slowly walked down the valley. On the distant hillsides antelope grazed; down the valley before me I could see a few deer running for cover to the willows by the stream. Now and then a grouse rose before me and flew rapidly away. Resisting all temptations to shoot at anything, I walked steadily on.

Climbing a hill, I sat on a rock and musingly gazed at the vast plains to the north-east, at the foothills of the range, and at the rugged, rocky range beyond. I love the Rocky Mountains, and never tire of their face. I wasted hours in looking, and in thinking of the many tales I had heard of the range. When the sun was high above me, I started for the willows. There I neatly shot the heads off six grouse. Then, jointing a light trout pole, I whipped the clear pools of the south fork of the Teton, and was soon rewarded by a string of fine half-pound trout.

Then came the pleasant walk back through the cool, dry air, and over the crisp grass of the north. What a luxury life was in the valley of the Teton. I turned my spoils over to the smiling Indian woman who acted as cook for Burr. The rest of the day I spent on horseback, running antelope with a lot of half-blood Indians. At eight o'clock supper was eaten. The sherry was brought out, and I scattered on the table a handful, my last, of Rosa Conchas, that had never paid duty, and, as we sat smoking, Burr told me this story:

"In the autumn of '88 I thought it might be profitable to start a trading-post in the Yellowstone Valley. Learning from the Blackfeet that the Sioux were camped on the south side of the river, I determined to ride over and see what arrangements I could make with them. I crossed the Belt Mountains, and, riding down the valley, was soon at their camp, I on the north side of the river, they on the south.

"I sat on my horse and hailed the camp. No answer. I could see plenty of Indians walking about, and again I hailed. No answer. I shouted myself hoarse, and the only notice taken of me was by an old buck, who walked to the river bank, looked at me, made an insulting gesture, and slowly walked off. I went there to trade, and, having got angry at the treatment, though I well knew that I ought to leave the valley at once, I, like a fool, resolved to cross the stream and brave the danger, so I forded and rode into the camp. I spoke to no one; no one spoke to me. The sullen braves turned their backs on me as I rode up the street. The young girls looked curiously at me. Riding slowly along I cooled rapidly. I saw that I was not wanted, and I at last fully realised that I was in danger. I did not dare to ride to the south, out of the camp, nor did I have courage enough to attempt to recross the river.

"Before me stood a great tent made of buffalo skins. It was the largest I had ever seen. I halted, dismounted, and stood silently at my horse's head. No one noticed me. Indians went past me, apparently not seeing me. At last a young woman came and stood before me.

"Looking straight into my eyes, she said: 'What do you want?' I looked her coldly in the face and made no reply. Smiling, she asked, 'What brings you here?' Steadily I gazed into her eyes and was voiceless. She left me and disappeared into the great lodge.

"Soon an Indian warrior in full paint, with bow and strung arrow in his hands, came to me. Speaking Blackfoot, he said: 'Why are you in this camp?' To him I replied: 'I wish to trade with you.' More men came. They took my horse, and seizing hold of my arm they led me into the great lodge. Here I was seated and a council was held. I sat and listened to them talk of what was best to do with such a presumptuous white man. Some were in favour of trading. The large majority of the Indians were in favour of torturing me.

"It was soon decided that I should be tortured; and they sat and discussed the many methods. After a two days' talk it was decided to burn me. I was in a strange condition mentally. I would listen to a plan of torture as though it was some other man they were talking about; and I would comment to myself on that plan as giving the chap but little chance of life. But when the dusky brave, who talked Blackfoot, told me that I was to die by fire the next day, I understood perfectly well that I was the man they had been talking about, and replied: 'I know it.' Clustering round me they asked if I had understood all the talk. 'Yes, I had.' 'Then why not answer the maiden when she spoke to you?' 'I came, not to talk to squaws, but to trade with men.' No use, I could do nothing by soft talk, and, having played my hand, finally resigned myself to my fate.

"I noticed that the girl who had first spoken to me in front of the lodge was watching me. She would quickly glance at me, and then drop her eyes on the buckskin shirt she was embroidering with Crow hair. Several times I noticed this, and once I replied with a smile. The lodge emptied. All were gone except the girl. She came quickly to my side, apparently to refold some buffalo robes, and in a whisper said: 'You are to die to-morrow. To-night I will have the best horse in the camp saddled and standing on the outside of the lodge. I will have the tent cut from the outside. You jump through, mount, and ride for your life. You may escape. You will burn if you stay.' Then, with a smile: 'The mare is mine. She is the fastest animal in the valley of Yellowstone. I give her to you.' She left me, and quickly resumed her work.

"As she wove the hair of many Crow scalp-locks into the shirt, I sat looking thankfully at her. She never looked at me again. As I saw a chance for my life my heart beat so loudly that I thought it would be heard. I calmed my face and waited. I ate fairly of supper. I smoked a pipe. All were very kind and attentive to me. Night was passing away, and still

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the Indians lingered, looking at the man they were to burn on the morrow. I leant back against the tent to rest myself, when I felt a hand gently pushing me forward. Sitting whistling, I felt the point of a knife come through and strike my neck. I did not flinch. I could feel the blood trickle down my back. I could feel the knife drawn carefully down until it hit the ground. Still whistling, I waited, my heart thumping, my blood on fire—waited a minute to give whoever cut the tent time to escape. Then grasping my heart and nerves for an instant, I gathered myself together, and turned backward through the opening.

"Instantly jumping to my feet, I vaulted into the saddle that was on the back of a white horse that stood there, and in the midst of yells, of rifle shots, of a pack of howling dogs, we rushed out of the camp. It seemed to me as though a thousand horsemen were in pursuit of me instantly. We galloped up the river to a bend I had seen. Dashing in, we forded it under a fire that made the water boil around us, and were out of water, and on the level land to the north of the river, before any of the Sioux were halfway across. Striking the trail to the Bozeman Pass, I took it, and knowing it, pushed boldly on, and though hotly pursued, my horse outlasted theirs, and I escaped. I never drew rein until I dismounted to the west of the pass.

"The girl saved me. With any other horse I should have been recaptured and burnt. I have not got the girl. The love I have for her the mare has instead. I returned to my post, and made no trade in the Yellowstone that year.

"Again. Last winter the snow was on the ground in January, and for three days I had been hunting for running antelope. The sun was very bright, and my eyes hurt me. I saw specks floating about; little chains with small links were constantly before me. My eyes burnt smartly when I returned to the agency. Daily, while hunting, I had seen the low, black clouds in the north that indicate the formation or marshalling of the winds of the frozen north. Daily the south wind swept them beyond the northern horizon; but the next morning found them looming portentously in the northern sky. On my return to the agency I found a runner had just got in from Belly River, in British America, with important news for me. It was necessary that I should go up at once. I started the next morning. My eyes hurt dreadfully.

"I always go to the Belly River, when the snow is on the ground, by the way of the Sweet Grass Hills, and there I camp one night. One side of the hills is always bare of snow, and there is a spring of good water on the northern side of the centre hill. A strong south wind was blowing when I started, but by noon I saw clouds to the north suddenly rise up. I knew that the marshalling of the north winds was completed, and they were eager for the assault on the soft south wind. On came the black cloud. The south wind still blew fiercely, but it could not stem the assault from the arctic region. Birds flew south before the storm; antelope and deer were running for shelter. I had reached my camping ground, and stood looking far off to the north, seeing the landmarks disappear one by one as the head of the 'blizzard' reached them and shrouded them in its icy breath. A calm. Then, with a mighty rush and a loud noise, the head of the 'blizzard' swept past me.

"The air was filled with particles of ice that cut through almost horizontally, and seemed as if they would never fall. Colder, ever colder, grew the wind, and denser the air as the ice particles thickened. I sought shelter in the rocks. Buckling the clothing on the mare I turned her loose, knowing that she would not leave me. Then I lay down in my blankets, and wrapping my beaver cloak around me, I tried to sleep. I began thinking, and could not sleep. The buffalo had not come south that winter, and the wolves were gaunt and hungry. As they follow a horseman over the plains in the summer, so they do in the winter, only more of them, and those great, gaunt, famine-breeders, the grey and black ones, go in largely increased numbers. I had a pack of them at my heels all day, and now they cropped up in my thoughts.

"Finally I slept. When I awoke it was dark. Holding up my naked hand, I felt the icy sweat of the blizzard strike sharply against it. The roar of the wind still continued. I waited, it seemed to me, for hours, when suddenly I felt my mare paw my breast. I spoke kindly to her, saying she had made a mistake. Soon she pawed me again, and I arose to find that all was dark; that I could not see the white mare. Alarmed, I struck a match under my cloak and looked down to see the blaze. I saw nothing, but the match burnt my fingers. With a desolating despondency I realised the fact that the glare of the snow encountered for the past few days had made me snow-blind; that I was fifty miles from the nearest house, and unable to see; that a furious storm was raging.

"Stupid, almost wild with horror, I thought I could hear the snuffing of the wolves, and the soft patter of their feet below the wild shriek of the arctic winds. I was simply benumbed with terror. The mare recalled me to myself by rubbing her cold muzzle against my face. She saw that something was wrong with me, but what she could not comprehend. I resolved to saddle her, to feed her, and, after she ate, to mount and let her take her own course. So I fed her the remaining measure of barley, and waited for her to eat.

"Then I saddled up, and without bridling, mounted, and, wrapping my cloak round me, sat steadily in the saddle, awaiting the frisky action of the high-strung animal. She stood trembling until I told her to go. Then I felt her turn until the ice drops struck obliquely on my right side and back, and she rapidly walked off. Not a motion or movement did she make to discompose my seat. Wrapped in my cloak, with hood drawn over my face, warm and encouraged with hope, I patiently sat on the horse. I could now hear the snarling of the wolves, and my only fear was that they, rendered desperate by hunger, might attack the mare. I dismissed the thought—would not think of it. If they did attack us, we were lost; if they did not, I thought we were safe.

"All day the 'blizzard' raged and tore icily around and on us. The mare walked rapidly or cantered slowly on. It seemed to me that we had been travelling for days, for weeks even, when the mare stopped and neighed loudly. Reaching forward, I felt the rough stockade; dismounting, I felt the hinges of the gate. Loudly I called. Then I took my rifle from the saddle, and rapidly I handled cartridges into it. At last a sleepy voice from the inside called: 'Who is there?' I answered 'Burr; and I am snow-blind. Come to me.' They came, and I was saved—saved for the second time by the white mare. Do you wonder that I, not having the Sioux maiden, love her mare?"

I sat by the bright fire, with my feet high upon the stool, and did not answer—simply sat and smoked, and thought of the girl, of the man, of the mare.

JAMES MONTAGU.

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A WOMAN OF THIRTY-FIVE.

"MARION, I love you!"

There is a touch of intreaty in the ardent tones, something of eagerness in the boyish voice, a suggestion of the real fervour which is the accompaniment of a man's first passion for a woman.

She sat on a stile and smiled deprecatingly at the young man from whom this original observation issued.

She had heard the words so often from his lips that they failed to touch her imagination afresh. They called for no comment. It was not the fact but the position created thereby which concerned her most. His voice for the moment seemed to come from a distance. In a desultory sort of way she was thinking of many things. The thought which came uppermost was perhaps the most trivial, and therefore claimed immediate attention. It occurred to her that at her age—she was thirty-five—sitting on a high stile even to an audience of one was not an attitude in which she appeared to advantage; she decided to get down.

"Rupert, give me your hand," she said.

"I was asking you to bestow yours upon me," he murmured, when she stood beside him.

"What a beautiful sunset!" she said inconsequently.

"Thank you, the solar system can wait. Marion, will you not promise to marry me?"

That was the very question she was asking herself. She found it hard to say "Yes," and more difficult to to say "No." She would try to temporise.

"Why not let things remain as they are, Rupert? We have been very happy."

"Marion, I want you to marry me, to feel sure of you. Give me your answer."

She had tried to keep their relations in the platonic stage, but he would have none of it. He was clearly a young man of some impetuosity. He was twenty-four, the son of a local solicitor, who had dallied with the law, and then given it up for painting. His friends predicted that he would do great things. It is the sort of remark which may be said of any young man of that age. If you are twenty-four and have good health everything is possible. Rupert Barrett had not yet found himself out. He felt sure that he loved Marion Cross. It was the one thing of which this rather nice boy with the affectionate brown eyes was certain.

"Rupert, I cannot marry you."

Marion Cross was not wholly unsophisticated. The only daughter of a country banker of the old-fashioned type, everybody knew and liked her. Rupert was the first man who had told her that she was loved. She was thirty-five, remember. Not old for her age by any means. Tall and slim, she had the fair hair and complexion, and the blue eyes which will carry a woman from youth into the confines of middle age, and still leave some of the fragrance of youth with her. She had not lost all her illusions. But she knew that to marry a man ten years her junior would be an unpardonable sin.

"No, Rupert," she said, "I will not marry you, and I will tell you why. You think you love me——"

"Marion, how can you be so cruel?"

"I am not cruel. I mean to be kind to you."

"Be a little more kin to me and a little less kind."

"Rupert, I am ten years older than you."

"Is that all. I thought you were going to say something new. You were ten years older two years ago. You will always be ten years older."

"That is just it, Rupert. I shall always be," she said sadly. "I shall become an old woman while you are still a young man."

It was a hard thing for a woman to confess, but she did it. She must have loved him dearly.

"Besides, you have your career to think of. You ought not to think of marrying for years. Go and make a name for yourself."

"Let me share my name with you?" he pleaded; "with you for my wife I feel that I could indeed do something that would make you proud of me. Say that you will. You know how much I love you. And you do care a little for me, Marion?"

"Yes, yes; and it is——"

"Then you do love me, Marion? And you will be my wife?"

"Don't ask me."

"But I will," he urged. "I don't understand you, Marion. One moment you admit that you care for me, and yet you refuse to marry me. I cannot understand."

"I would not try dear, if I were you. You know women are supposed to be an enigma."

"Do not trifle with me," pleaded the boy's voice. "You cannot love me!"

"Indeed," she cried, "I love you better than you know!"

And she allowed him to take her in his arms. Poor Marion! She smiled bravely, and sent him home happy when they parted, but she was rather tempted to despise herself.

Rupert's happiness was very short lived. For a whole week he really imagined that Marion Cross would become his wife. For the same period she had a fear that she might be tempted to do this thing.

Then Rupert read a little paragraph in the *Willington Gazette*.

"Much interest has been occasioned by the announcement that a marriage has been arranged between the Rev. Ambrose Godley and Miss Cross, the daughter of our old and esteemed resident, Mr. Montagu Cross."

When he read this Rupert felt that the sun had suddenly grown cold and dead.

He could not credit such duplicity on the part of the woman he had loved.

The news was true, however. His father referred to it at dinner that evening.

"Have you heard the news, Rupert?" he said casually. "The Vicar is going to marry Marion Cross."

Rupert's mother had died years ago, and the father and son had never quite understood each other. Mr. Barratt, senior, in his professional capacity, was the repository of many secrets, but he had never won his son's confidence. He had some suspicion as to the state of affairs between Rupert and Marion Cross, but they had never spoken on the subject.

"I am glad," he thought, "that that nonsense is put an end to."

In his own mind he had little doubt that this middle-aged spinster had kept his son's mind unsettled. He regretted that Rupert had not taken kindly to the law, but he now resolved that Rupert should go to London and work out his own destiny.

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The next day Rupert received the following letter:

"MY DEAR RUPERT,—

"You will have heard the news that I am about to marry the vicar, and are no doubt thinking hard things of me. I should like to see you once more. Will you meet me at the old place on Thursday afternoon?

"Your affectionate friend, MARION CROSS."

Rupert, who thought that the world ought to cease to rotate on its axis, was in no mood to forgive Marion Cross the part she had played in wrecking his happiness. He decided that he would not see her again, but would write. After composing and destroying quite a dozen letters, he managed to arrive at the following:—

"MY DEAR MARION,—

"I was one of the last persons to hear of your good fortune. But if my congratulations are tardy they are none the less sincere. I do not see that any good can come of our meeting again. With the fervent hope that your career of duplicity is now at an end, and wishing you all the happiness you deserve,

"I am, yours affectionately,

"RUPERT BARRETT."

The satisfaction with which the writer regarded this letter was some balm to his outraged feelings. Poor Marion was distressed when she received it. She had acted for what she thought were the best interests of this young man. She was fearful that she might succumb to the temptation to marry him, and when the Vicar, who was a widower of forty-five, asked her to be his wife she clutched at the opportunity with the spirit of despair.

She could not say she had any affection for the Vicar, but she respected him. She had been in grave danger of ceasing to respect herself. So Marion Cross married a man who had a nicely adjusted affection for her, and who felt the social need of a wife, for he was a man who had distinct chances of preferment. He was a high churchman at a time when that party was beginning to to be paramount in the Church of England, and he had a natural gift of oratory which he had assiduously cultivated. With good luck and no inconvenient scruples, he might yet wear the mitre.

A week before the marriage Rupert took his departure for London with the professed purpose of studying painting and the arts.

It must be confessed that what Rupert lacked was ballast. He wrote to his father regularly; dutiful letters, in which he said very little about himself. At the studios he gave the impression of having ability but little application. He soon began to drift instead of living with a purpose. Then one day came a letter to Mr. Barrett, senior, that Rupert had been rash enough to marry without consulting his father, and that he was bringing his wife home.

Rupert will never forget the evening they arrived. Neither will his father. Rupert's wife was the only person who was happy—sublimely, ignorantly happy.

Mr. Barrett saw seated opposite him a young woman of rather florid appearance and with obviously dyed golden hair. He put her age down at twenty-seven, and she was already slightly *passé*.

"You know I used to sit for Rupert," she said, in one of her early attempts at conversation during dinner.

"Sit for him!" exclaimed the old gentleman, realising for the first time that this aggressive young person had been a painters' model.

Both Rupert and his father were glad when the meal had come to an end.

There were awful silences between the trio, and still more dreadful moments of confidence on the part of the young bride. She had a terrible intrepidity of talk. When the fish was served, Mr. Barrett was merely of opinion that his son had married an empty-headed creature; by the time dinner was at an end he realised that she was simply impossible.

Presently the two men were alone.

"Rupert," said his father gravely, "perhaps you will now tell me why you have presumed to marry without my consent. You have no means whereby to support a wife."

"Father, I know all that you feel. I have been an awful fool. Forgive me!"

"Never!" said the old man bitterly. "But I have decided what I will do. Your allowance of £200 a year will be continued, and I trust when this visit is at an end I shall see but little of you and the woman you have made your wife."

Rupert said no more. He knew his father to be a stern man, and he was too ashamed of his own folly to attempt to offer any excuses.

Things were so strained in his father's house that Rupert spent much of his time out of doors alone. On the third day after his return he met Marion on the high road outside the town. She stopped to speak to him.

"I must congratulate you, Rupert, on your marriage, and I hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting your wife."

"Marion," said Rupert, his old love for her surging up again at this meeting, "why did you treat me so badly?"

"You must not talk of that. You have got to be very happy with your wife."

"Happy! Oh Heaven!" he broke in bitterly. "I am the most miserable thing on earth. Marion, if you had only married me!"

If she only had. How often latterly had the thought come to Marion herself. Six months of married life had sufficed to find the Vicar out. The Reverend Ambrose Godley passed in the world as a man of high aims and true religion. Marion had come to know that his life was a sham, that he disbelieved the things he preached, and that the mainspring of his character was insincerity. His one idea was self-advancement; he was an opportunist of the meanest type. Marion had never pretended to love him. Now she had ceased to respect him.

"Rupert," she said finally, "good-bye. What is past is past. Blame me if you will; I acted for the best, but I have lately thought that I ought indeed to have married you."

"Then you did care for me, Marion?"

"Rupert, I shall always love you."

"Then it is not too late!" he cried eagerly. "Let us go——"

"And add sin to folly. No dear. It is too late! We must live our lives. Whatever might have been, your wife and my husband stand between us now."

* * * * *

The Reverend Ambrose Godley realised his ambition and became a Bishop; Marion threw herself into the social duties of her position, and in time came to pity her husband. She was denied the consolation of motherhood. Rupert paints pot-boilers, has four untidy children, and a wife who is said to drink.

HENRY A. SLACK.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

SUMMARY.

ANDREA DE MANCINI, a nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, is found one day by the latter in the Palais Royal, Paris, in a state of intoxication. Gaston de Luynes, the narrator of this story, and fencing-master to de Mancini, is blamed by the Cardinal for allowing his nephew to get into such a condition, and is removed from his position of fencing-master.

Eugène de Canaples insults de Mancini and a duel is arranged, but the Cardinal hears of it and tells de Luynes that it must not take place. De Luynes realises that if he does not prevent it the Cardinal has power to do him great harm, and accordingly raises a quarrel with de Canaples which ends in a fight, de Canaples being severely wounded. The onlookers are enraged with de Luynes because he indiscreetly lets fall the fact that he raised this quarrel so as to prevent a duel between de Mancini and de Canaples, and he has to flee for his life. To escape his pursuers he springs on the step of a passing carriage, and the ladies inside let him shelter there for a time, but when he says that he has wounded de Canaples they order him to alight.

De Luynes then accompanies de Mancini to the home of Eugène de Canaples, whose sister, Yvonne, Cardinal Mazarin wishes de Mancini to marry. The Chevalier de Canaples receives de Luynes and de Mancini very cordially at his château. Yvonne, however, is not at all gracious to de Luynes, because she knows of the duel which he fought with her brother, as she and her sister Geneviève were the two ladies who befriended him. De Mancini falls in love with Geneviève.

De Luynes does not stay at the Château de Canaples, but at an inn in Blois, the *Lys de France*. One morning he is visited there by the Marquis de St. Auban, who himself wants to marry Yvonne—for her money. After insulting each other a duel is arranged for the following morning, but the time is afterwards altered to the evening of the day of the insult. St. Auban tells de Luynes that Cardinal Mazarin has issued a warrant for his arrest.

As de Luynes is riding to Canaples after his encounter with St. Auban, he is met by Malpertuis, an officer who had been in the train of St. Auban, and by him he is told that a plot is on foot to kidnap Yvonne. De Luynes warns the lady, but she takes no heed and falls into the trap set for her. De Luynes starts out to her assistance, and succeeds in effecting a rescue after a severe struggle.

While returning with Yvonne to Canaples the carriage is stopped and de Luynes arrested by M. de Montrésor on a warrant from Cardinal Mazarin.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of what Befel at Reaux.

AT my captor's bidding I mounted the horse which they had untethered from the carriage, and we started off along the road which the coach itself had disappeared upon a moment before. But we travelled at a gentle trot which after that evening's furious riding was welcome to me.

With bitterness I reflected, as I rode, that the very moment at which Mademoiselle de Canaples had brought herself to think better of me was like to prove the last we should spend together. Yet not altogether bitter was that reflection; for with it came also the consolation, whereof I had told her, that I had not been taken before she had had cause to change her mind concerning me.

That she should care for me was too preposterous an idea to be nourished, and indeed it was better—much better—that M. de Montrésor had come before, grown sanguine, as lovers will, I had again earned her scorn by showing her what my heart contained. Much better was it that I should pass forever out of her life—as indeed methought I was like to pass out of all life—whilst I could leave in her mind a kind remembrance and a grateful regret free from the stain that a subsequent possible presumption of mine might have cast o'er it.

Then my thoughts shifted to Andrea. St. Auban would hear of my removal, and I cared not to think of what profit he might derive from it. To Yvonne also his presence must hereafter be a menace, and in that wherein to-night he had failed, he might, again, succeed. It was at this juncture of my reverie that M. de Montrésor's pleasant young voice aroused me.

"You appear downcast, M. de Luynes."

"I downcast!" I echoed, throwing back my head, and laughing. "Nay, I was but thinking."

"Believe me, M. de Luynes," he said kindly, "when I tell you that it grieves me to be charged with this matter. I have done my best to capture you; that was my duty. But I should have rejoiced had I failed, with the consciousness of having done all in my power."

"Thanks, Montrésor," I murmured, and silence followed.

"I have been thinking, Monsieur," he went on presently, "that possibly the absence of your sword causes you discomfort."

"Eh? Discomfort? It does, right truly!"

"Give me your word of honour that you will attempt no escape, and not only shall your sword be returned to you, but you shall travel to Paris with all comfort and dignity."

Now so amazed was I, that I paused to stare at the officer who was young enough to make such a proposal to a man of my reputation. He turned his face towards me, and in the moonlight I could make out his questioning glance.

"Well, Monsieur?"

"I am more than grateful to you, M. de Montrésor," I replied, "and I freely give you my word of honour to seek no means of eluding you, nor to avail myself of any that may be presented to me."

I said this loud enough for those behind to hear, so that no surprise was evinced when the lieutenant bade the man who bore my sword return it to me.

If he who may chance to read these simple pages shall have gathered aught of my character from their perusal, he will marvel perchance that I should give the lieutenant my word of honour, instead rather of watching for an opportunity to at least attempt an escape. Preeminent in my thoughts, however, stood at that moment the necessity to remove St. Auban, and methought that by acting as I did, I saw a way by which haply I might accomplish this. What might thereafter befall me seemed of little moment.

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"M. de Montrésor," I said presently, "your kindness impels me to set a further tax upon your generosity."

"That is, Monsieur?"

"Bid your men fall back a little, and I will tell you."

He made a sign to his troopers, and when the distance between us had been sufficiently widened, I began:

"There is a man at present across the river yonder who has done me no little injury, and with him I have an appointment at nine o'clock to-night at St. Sulpice des Reaux, where our swords are to determine the difference between us. I crave, Monsieur, your permission to keep that appointment."

"Impossible," he answered curtly.

I took a deep breath, like a man who is about to jump an obstacle in his path.

"Why impossible, Monsieur?"

"Because you are a prisoner, and therefore no longer under obligation to keep appointments."

"How would you feel, Montrésor, if burning to be avenged upon a man who had done you irreparable wrong, you were arrested an hour before the time at which you were to meet this man, sword in hand, and your captor—whose leave you craved to keep the assignation—answered you with the word 'impossible'?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur," he replied impatiently. "But you forget my position. Let us suppose that I allow you to go to St. Sulpice des Reaux! What if you do not return?"

"You mistrust me?" I exclaimed, my hopes melting.

"You misapprehend me. I mean, what if you are killed?"

"I do not think that I shall be?."

"Ah! But what if you are What shall I say to my Lord Cardinal?"

"Oh, tell him that I am dead, and that he is saved the trouble of hanging me. The most he can want of me is my life. Let us suppose that you had come an hour later. You would have been forced to wait until after the encounter, and did I fall, matters would be no different."

The young man fell to thinking, but I, knowing that it is not well to let the young ponder overlong if you would bend them to your wishes, broke in upon his reflections.

"Yes, Montrésor, yonder are the lights of Blois; by eight o'clock we shall be in the town. Come, grant me leave to cross the Loire, and by ten o'clock, or half-past at the latest, I shall return to sup with you, or I shall be dead. I swear it."

"Were I in your position," he answered musingly, "I know how I would be treated, and, by Heaven, come what may, I shall deal with you accordingly. You may go to your assignation, M. de Luynes, and may God prosper you!"

And thus it came to pass that shortly after eight o'clock, albeit a prisoner, I rode into the courtyard of the *Lys de France*, and alighting, I stepped across the threshold of the inn, and strode up to a table at which I had espied Michelot. He sat nursing a huge measure of wine, into the depths of which he was gazing pensively, with an expression so glum upon his weatherbeaten countenance that it defies depiction. So deep was he in his meditations, that albeit I stood by the table surveying him for a full minute, he took no heed of me.

"Come, Michelot!" I said at length. "Wake up."

He started up with a cry of amazement; surprise chased away the grief that had been on his face, and a moment later joy unfeigned and good to see took the place of surprise.

"You have escaped, Monsieur!" he cried and albeit caution made him utter the words beneath his breath, a shout seemed to lurk somewhere in the whisper.

Pressing his hand, I sat down and briefly told him how matters stood, and how I came to be for the moment free. And when I had done I bade him, since his wound had not proved serious, to get his hat and cloak and go with me to find a boat.

He obeyed me and a quarter of an hour after we had quitted the hostelry he was rowing me across the stream, whilst wrapped in my cloak I sat in the stern, thinking of Yvonne.

"Monsieur," said Michelot, "observe how swift is the stream. If I were to let the boat drift we should be at Tours to-morrow, and from there it would be easy to defy pursuit. We have enough money to reach Spain. What say you, Monsieur?"

"Say, you rascal? Why, bend your back to the work, and set me ashore by St. Sulpice in a quarter of an hour, or I'll forget that you have been my friend. Would you see me dishonoured?"

"Sooner than see you dead," he grumbled, as he resumed his task. Thereafter, whilst he rowed, Michelot entertained me with some quaint ideas touching that which fine gentlemen call honour, and to what sorry passes it was wont to bring them, concluding by thanking God that he was no gentleman and had no honour to lead him into mischief.

At last, howbeit, our journey came to an end, and I sprang ashore at some five hundred paces from the little chapel, and almost exactly opposite the Château de Canaples. I stood for a moment gazing across the water at the lighted windows of the Château, wondering which of those eyes that looked out upon the night might be that of Yvonne's chamber.

Then, bidding Michelot await me, or follow did I not return in half-an-hour, I turned and moved away towards the chapel.

There is a clearing in front of the little white edifice which, rather than a temple, is but a monument to the martyr who is said to have perished on that spot in the days before Clovis. As I advanced into the centre of this open patch of ground, and stood clear of the black silhouettes of the trees, cast about me by the moon, two men appeared to detach themselves from the side wall of the chapel and advanced to meet me.

Albeit they were wrapped in their cloaks, up-tilted behind by their protruding scabbards, it was not difficult to tell the tall figure and stately bearing of St. Auban and the mincing gait of Vilmorin.

I doffed my hat in a grave salutation, which was courteously returned.

"I trust, Messieurs, that I have not kept you waiting?"

"I was on the point of expressing that very hope, Monsieur," returned St. Auban. "We have but arrived. Do you come alone?"

"As you perceive."

"Hum! M. le Vicomte then will act for both of us."

I bowed in token of my satisfaction, and without more ado cast aside my cloak, pleased to see that the affair was to be conducted with decency and politeness, as such matters should ever be conducted, albeit that impoliteness may have marked their origin.

The Marquis having followed my example, and divested himself of his cloak and hat, unsheathed his rapier and delivered it to Vilmorin, who came across with it to where I stood. When he was close to me, I saw that he was deadly pale, his teeth chattered, and the hand that held the weapon shook as with the palsy.

"M-Monsieur," he stammered, "will it please you to lend me your sword, that I m-measure it?"

"What formalities!" I exclaimed, with an amused smile as I complied with his request. "I am afraid you have caught a chill, Vicomte. The night air is little suited to health so delicate."

He answered me with a baleful glance, as silently he took my sword and set it, point to hilt, with St. Auban's. He appeared to have found some slight difference in the length, for he took two steps away from me, holding the weapons well in the light, where for a moment he surveyed them attentively. His hand shook so, that the blades clattered one against the other the while. But, of a sudden, taking both rapiers by the hilt, he struck the blades together with a ringing clash, then flung them both behind him as far as he could contrive, leaving me thunderstruck with amazement and marvelling whether fear had robbed him of his wits.

Not until I perceived that the trees around me appeared to spring into life did it occur to me that the clashing of blades was a signal, and that I was trapped. With the realisation of it I was upon Vilmorin in a bound, and with both hands I had caught the dog by the throat before he thought of flight. The violence of my onslaught bore him to the ground, and I, not to release my choking grip, went with him.

For a moment we lay together where we had fallen, his

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slender body twisting and writhing under me, his swelling face upturned, and his protruding eyes horror-stricken gazing into mine, that were fierce and pitiless. Voices rang above me; some one stooped and strove to pluck me from my victim; then below the left shoulder I felt a sting of pain, first cold then hot, and I knew that I had been stabbed. Again I felt the blade thrust in, lower down and driven deeper; then as the knife was for the second time withdrawn, and my flesh sucked at the steel, the pain of it sent a shudder through me, the instinct of preservation overcame the sweet lust to strangle Vilmorin. I let him go, and staggering to my feet, I turned to face those murderers who struck a defenceless man behind.

Swords gleamed around me; one, two, three, four, five, six I counted, and stood weak and dazed from loss of blood, gazing stupidly at the white blades. Had I but had my sword I should have laid about me, and gone down beneath their blows as befits a soldier. But the absence of that trusty friend left me limp and helpless, cowed for the first time since I had borne arms.

Of a sudden I became aware that St. Auban stood opposite me, hand on hip, surveying me with a malicious leer. As our eyes met, "So, master meddler," quoth he mockingly, "you crow less lustily than is your wont."

My arms were gripped from behind, and in my spent condition I was held there powerless at the Marquis' mercy.

"Hound!" I gasped, choking with rage. "If you are a man—if there be a spark of pride or honour left in your lying, cowardly soul, order your assassins to give me my sword, and wounded though I be, I'll fight with you this duel that you lured me here to fight."

He laughed harshly.

"I told you but this morning, Master de Luynes, that a St. Auban does not fight a man of your stamp. You forced this affair upon me; you shall reap the consequences."

Despite the weakness arising from loss of blood, I sprang towards him, beside my self with fury. But ere I had covered half the distance that lay betwixt us, my arms were gripped from behind, and in my spent condition I was held there, powerless, at the Marquis' mercy. He came slowly forward until we were but some two feet apart. For a second he stood leering at me, then raising his hand, he struck me—struck a man whose arms another held—full upon the face. Passion for the moment lent me strength, and in that moment I had wrenched my right arm free and returned his blow with interest.

With an oath he got out a dagger that hung from his baldrick.

"Take that, you dog!" he snarled, burying the blade in my breast as he spoke.

"Oh, Heaven! You are murdering me!" I gasped.

"Have you discovered it? What penetration!" he retorted, and those about him laughed at his indecent jest.

He made a sign, and the man who had held me withdrew his hands. I staggered forward, deprived of his support, then a crashing blow took me across the head.

I swayed for an instant, and with arms upheld I clutched at the air, as if I sought, by hanging to it, to save myself from falling; then the moon appeared to go dark, a noise as of the sea beating upon its shore filled my ears, and I seemed to be falling, falling, falling.

A voice that buzzed and vibrated oddly, growing more distant at each word, reached me as I sank. "Come," it said, "fling that carrion into the river."

Then nothingness engulfed me.

CHAPTER XV.

Of My Resurrection.

EVEN as the blow which had plunged me into senselessness had imparted to me the sinking sensation which I have feebly endeavoured to depict, so did the first dim ray of returning consciousness bring with it the feeling that I was again being buoyed upwards through the thick waters that had enveloped me, to their surface, where intelligence and wakefulness awaited.

And as I felt myself borne up and up in that effortless ascension—my senses awake and my reason half-dormant—an exquisite sense of langour pervaded my whole being. Presently methought that the surface was gained at last, and an instinct impelled me to open my eyes upon the light, of which through closed lids I had become conscious.

I beheld a fair-sized room superbly furnished, and flooded with amber sunlight, suggestive in itself of warmth and luxury, and the vision of which heightened the delicious torpor that held me in thrall. The bed I lay upon was such, I told myself, as would not have disgraced a royal sleeper. It was upheld by great pillars of black oak, carved with a score of fantastic figures, and all around it, descending from the dome above, hung curtains of rich damask, drawn back at the side that looked upon the window. Near at hand stood a table laden with vials and such utensils as one sees by the bedside of the

wealthy sick. All this I beheld in a languid, unreasoning fashion through my half-open lids, and albeit the luxury of the room and the fine linen of my bed told me that this was neither my Paris lodging in the Rue St. Antoine, nor yet my chamber at the hostelry of the *Lys de France*, still I taxed not my brain with any questions touching my whereabouts.

I closed me eyes, and I must have slept again, for when next I opened them a burly figure stood in the deep bay of the latticed window, looking out through the leaded panes. I recognised the stalwart frame of Michelot, and at last I asked myself where I might be. It did not occur to me that I had but to call him to receive an answer to that question. Instead, I closed my eyes again, and essayed to think. But just then there came a gentle scratching at the door, and I could hear Michelot tiptoeing across the room; next he and the one he had admitted tip-toed back towards my bedside, and as they came I caught a whisper in a voice that seemed to drag me to full consciousness.

"How fares the poor invalid this morning?"

"The fever is gone, Mademoiselle, and he may wake at any moment, indeed, it is strange that he should sleep so long."

"He will be the better for it when he does awaken. I will remain here while you rest, Michelot. My poor fellow, you are almost as worn out with your vigils as he is with the fever."

"Pooh, I am strong enough, Mademoiselle," he answered. "I will get a mouthful of food, and return, for I would be by when he wakes."

Then their voices sank so low that as they withdrew I caught not what was said. The door closed softly, and for a space there was silence, broken at last by a sigh above my head. With an answering sigh I opened wide my eyes, and feasted them upon the lovely face of Yvonne de Canaples, as she bent over me with a look of tenderness and pity that at once recalled to me our parting when I was arrested.

But suddenly meeting the stare of my gaze, she drew back with a half-stifled cry, whose meaning my dull wits sought not to interpret; but methought I caught from her lips the words, "Thank God!"

"Where am I, Mademoiselle?" I inquired, and the faintness of my voice amazed me.

"You know me!" she exclaimed, as though the thing were a miracle. Then coming forward again, and setting her cool, sweet hand upon my forehead, "Hush," she murmured, in the accents one might use to soothe a child. "You are at Canaples, among friends. Now sleep."

"At Canaples!" I echoed. "How came I here? I am a prisoner, am I not?"

"A prisoner!" she exclaimed. "No, no, you are not a prisoner. You are among friends."

"Did I then but dream that Montrésor arrested me yesterday on the road to Meung? Ah! I recollect! M. de Montrésor gave me leave on my word of honour to go to Reaux."

Then, like an avalanche, remembrance swept down upon me, and my memory drew a vivid picture of the happenings at St. Sulpice.

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "Am I not dead, then?" And I sought to struggle up into a sitting posture, but that gentle hand upon my forehead restrained, and robbed me of all will that was not hers.

"Hush, Monsieur," she said softly. "Lie still. By a miracle and the faithfulness of Michelot you live. Be thankful, be content, and sleep."

"But my wounds, Mademoiselle?" I inquired feebly.

"They are healed."

"Healed?" quoth I, and in my amazement my voice sounded louder than it had yet done since my awakening. "Healed? Three such wounds as I took last night, to say naught of a broken head, healed?"

"'Twas not last night, Monsieur."

"Not last night? Was it not last night that I went to Reaux?"

"It is nearly a month since that took place," she answered, with a smile. "For nearly a month have you lain unconscious upon that bed, with the angel of Death at your pillow. You have fought and won a silent battle. Now sleep, Monsieur, and ask no more questions until next you awaken, when Michelot shall tell you all that took place."

She held a glass to my lips, from which I drank gratefully, then, with the submissiveness of a babe, I obeyed her and slept.

As she had promised, it was Michelot who greeted me when next I opened my eyes, on the following day. There were tears in his eyes—eyes that had looked grim and unmoved upon the horrors of the battle-field.

From him I learnt how, after they had flung me into the river, deeming me dead already, St. Auban and his men had made off. The swift stream swirled me along towards the spot where, in the boat, Michelot awaited my return, all unconscious of what was taking place. He had heard the splash, and had suddenly stood up, on the point of going ashore, when my body rose within a few feet of him. He spoke of the agony of mind wherewith he had suddenly stretched forth and clutched me by my doublet, fearing that I was indeed dead. He had lifted me into the boat to find that my heart still beat, and that the blood flowed from my wounds. These he had there and then bound up in the only rude fashion he was master of, and forthwith, thinking of Andrea and the Chevalier de Canaples, who were my friends, and of Mademoiselle who was my debtor, also seeing that the Château was the nearest place, he had rowed straight across to Canaples, and there I had lain during the four weeks that had elapsed, nursed by Mademoiselle, Andrea, and himself, and thus won back to life.

Ah, Heaven! How good it was to know that some one there was still who cared for worthless Gaston de Luynes a little—enough to watch beside him and withhold his soul from the grim claws of Death.

"What of M. de St. Auban?" I inquired presently.

"He has not been seen since that night. Probably he feared that did he come to Blois, the Chevalier would find means of punishing him for the attempted abduction of Mademoiselle."

"Ah, then Andrea is safe?"

As if in answer to my question, the lad entered at that moment, and upon seeing me sitting up, talking to Michelot, he uttered an exclamation of joy, and hurried forward to my bedside.

"Gaston, dear friend!" he cried, as he took my hand—and a thin withered hand it was.

We talked long together, we three, and anon we were joined by the Chevalier de Canaples, who offered me also, in his hesitating manner, his felicitations. And with me they lingered until Yvonne came to drive them with protestations from my bedside.

Such, in brief, was the manner of my resurrection. For a week or so I still kept my chamber; then, one day, towards the middle of April, the weather being warm and the sun bright, Michelot assisted me to don my clothes, which hung strangely empty upon my gaunt, emaciated frame, and leaning heavily upon my faithful henchman, I made my way below.

In the *salon* I found the Chevalier de Canaples with Mesdemoiselles and Andrea awaiting me, and the kindness wherewith they overwhelmed me as I sat propped up with pillows was such that I asked myself again and again if indeed I was that same Gaston de Luynes who, but a little while ago, had held himself as destitute of friends as he was of fortune. I was the pampered hero of the hour, and even little Geneviève had a sunny smile and a kind word for me.

Thereafter my recovery progressed with great strides, and gradually, day by day, I felt more like my vigorous old self. They were happy days, for Mademoiselle was often at my side, and ever kind to me; so kind was she, that presently, as my strength grew, there fell a great cloud athwart my happiness—the thought that soon I must leave Canaples, never to return there; leave Mademoiselle's presence, never to come into it again.

I was Monsieur de Montrésor's prisoner. I had learnt that in common with all others, save those at Canaples, he deemed me dead, and that, informed of it by a message from St.

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Auban, he had returned to Paris on the day following that of my journey to Reaux. Nevertheless, since I lived, he had my word of honour, and it was my duty, so soon as I had regained sufficient strength, to journey to Paris, and deliver myself into his hands.

On the last day of April I essayed a fencing bout with Andrea, and so strong and supple did I prove myself that I was forced to realise that the time was come.

As I was on the point of returning indoors, with the foils under my arm, Andrea called me back.

"Gaston, I have something of importance to say to you. Will you take a turn with me down yonder by the river."

There was a serious, almost nervous look on his comely face, which arrested my attention. I dropped the foils, and taking his arm, I went with him as he bid me. We seated ourselves on the grass, by the edge of the gurgling waters, and he began:

"It is now two months since we came to Blois—I to pay my court to the wealthy Mademoiselle de Canaples; you to watch over and protect me—nay, you need not interrupt me. Michelot has told me what St. Auban sought here, and the true motives of your journey to St. Sulpice. Never shall I be able to sufficiently prove my gratitude to you, my poor Gaston. But tell me, dear friend, you who from the outset saw how matters stood, why did you not inform St. Auban that he had no cause to hunt me down since I intended not to come betwixt him and Yvonne?"

"Merciful Heavens!" I exclaimed, "that little fair-haired coquette has——"

"Gaston," he interrupted, "You go too fast. I love Geneviève de Canaples. I have loved her, I think, since the moment I beheld her in the inn at Choisy, and what is more, she loves me."

"So that?" I asked with an ill-repressed sneer.

"We have plighted our troth, and with her father's sanction, or without it, she will do me the honour to become my wife."

"Admirable!" I exclaimed. "And my Lord Cardinal?"

"May hang himself on his stole for aught I care."

"Ah! Truly a dutiful expression for a nephew who has thwarted his uncle's plans."

"My uncle's plans are like himself, cold and selfish in their ambition."

"Andrea, Andrea! Whatever your uncle may be, to those of your blood, at least, he was never selfish."

"Not selfish!" he cried. "Think you that he is enriching and contracting great alliances for us because he loves us? No, no, our uncle seeks to gain our support, and with it the support of those noble houses to which he is allying us. The nobility opposes him, therefore he seeks to find relatives among noblemen, so that he may weather the storm of which his far-seeing eyes have already detected the first dim clouds. What to him are my feelings, my inclinations, my affections? Things of no moment, to be sacrificed so that I may serve him in the manner that will bring him the most profit. Yet you call him not selfish! Were he not selfish I should go to him and say, 'I love Geneviève de Canaples. Create me Duke, as you would do did I wed her sister, and the Chevalier de Canaples will not withstand our union.' What think you would be his answer?"

"I have a shrewd idea what his answer would be," I replied slowly. "Also I have a shrewd idea of what he will say when he learns in what manner you have defied his wishes."

"He can but order me away from Court, or, at most, banish me from France."

"And then what will become of you—of you and your wife?"

"What is to become of us," he cried, in a tone that was almost of anger. "Think you that I am a pauper dependent upon my uncle's bounty? I have an estate near Palermo, which for all that it does not yield riches, is yet sufficient to enable us to live with dignity and comfort."

"Well, well," said I. "If you are resolved upon it, it is ended."

He appeared to meditate for a moment, then:

"We have decided to be married by the Curé of St. Innocent on the day after to-morrow."

"My faith!" I answered, with a whistle, "you have wasted no time in determining your plans. Does Yvonne know of it?"

"We have dared tell nobody," he replied, and a moment later he added, hesitatingly, "you, I know, will not betray us."

"Do you know me so little that you doubt me on that score? Have no fear, Andrea, I shall not speak. Besides, to-morrow or the next day at latest, I leave Canaples."

"You do not mean that you are returning to the *Lys de France?*"

"No. I am going farther than that. I am going to Paris."

"To Paris?"

"To Paris, to deliver myself up to M. de Montrésor, who gave me leave to go to Reaux some seven weeks ago."

"But it is madness, Gaston!" he ejaculated.

"All virtue is madness in a world so sinful; nevertheless, I go. In a measure I am glad that things have fallen out with you as they have done; for when the news goes abroad that you have married Geneviève de Canaples, and left the heiress free, your enemies will vanish, and you will have no further need of me."

He sat in silence, casting pebbles into the stream, and

"Now sleep, Monsieur, and ask no more questions until next you awaken."

watching the ripples they made upon the surface of the waters.

"Have you told Mademoiselle?" he asked at length.

"Not yet. I shall tell her to-day. You also, Andrea, must take her into your confidence touching your approaching marriage. That she will prove a good friend to you, I am assured."

"But what reason shall I give for my secrecy?" he inquired.

"Give no reason," I answered. "Let Geneviève tell her of what you contemplate, and if a reason she must have, let Geneviève bid her come to me. This much will I do for you in the matter; indeed, Andrea, it is the last service I am like to render you."

"Sh! Here comes the Chevalier. She shall be told to-day."

(To be continued.)

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Mr. Wilson's Experiences as a Tree Trimmer.

"WHAT are you going to do with that saw, Henry?" asked Mrs. Wilson of her husband, who was walking round the yard looking up at the top of the trees and whistling.

"Well, Mrs. Wilson, I am thinking seriously of trimming these trees," he replied, as he slapped his leg with the saw, and, turning his head to one side, he gazed steadfastly at the top of a tree, at the same time gleefully raising the tone of his whistle a few notes higher.

"You will do wonders, trimming trees. How will you get up there?" she sneeringly observed.

"Madam, I am no boy to shin up there, and not being endowed with wings, I expect to use an ordinary ladder," he meditatively replied.

"You will break your neck—that is what you will do," she asserted.

"Madam, it's my neck, my tree, my ladder, and my climb. If I kill myself it will not cost you anything. All I ask of you is to go into the house and stay there. When I want any of your advice I will call on you for it," he loftily remarked.

"You are altogether too high-flown, Mr. Wilson. You may want some assistance before you finish this job. If you do you need not call on me for it," and the door slammed as she went into the house.

In a few minutes she came out and looked up at Wilson, who had just got himself into position and was sawing off a limb.

"Henry Wilson, do you know that you are standing with one foot on the piece that will drop to the ground? You will break your neck. Stop sawing this instant," she commanded.

"Mrs. Wilson, who is doing this sawing?" he asked, straightening up and giving his wife a withering look.

As he turned to resume his work the limb broke off with a crash. He caught a branch, and hung dangling, his feet about ten feet from the ground.

"Just as I expected," she cried, as she ran to the tree. "Shall I get a quilt for you to fall on, Henry?"

"No! Get a sheet of paper; or perhaps you might catch me in your apron," he sarcastically rejoined.

"If I had a clothes-prop I might push you over, so that you could reach the ladder. What will you do?" she inquired.

"Do you suppose I am going to hang here like a smoked ham, and let you punch me with a clothes-prop? If you were capable of making two moves in half a day, you might get the ladder round here in time for me to eat breakfast to-morrow morning!" he yelled.

"Hold on, Henry! I will think of something."

"Mrs. Wilson, are you going to do anything to help me down, or must I hang here till the wind changes, so that it will blow me over to the ladder? If you had stayed in the house and minded your own business, I would have been all right; but you cannot get along without interfering with someone. If you will bring the ladder round here, I will try to come down," he panted.

"I ought to go straight into the house and leave you, as a punishment for trying to lay the blame of this on to me," she indignantly replied.

"Great Scott, woman! are you going to stand there all day and make remarks? I am no monkey to hold on to this limb for a week. Get that ladder round here quick or I shall be on the ground," he shrieked.

She grasped the ladder, and struggled to drag it to where he was. It was all she could do to end it up, and as she was trying to ease it down by his side it slipped from her hands and fell against him. There was a smothered groan, a struggle on his part, and down came Wilson and ladder in a heap on the grass.

"Murdered! At last I'm done for!" came in agonised tones from under the ladder.

"Are you hurt, Henry?" she anxiously inquired.

"Hurt? No! It does not hurt to be knocked off a five-storey house, and then have the house on you! Oh, no I am not hurt!" and he groaned as he poked his head out between the rounds of the ladder.

"Are either of your legs or arms broken?" she asked as she attempted to remove the ladder, but only succeeded in striking his head with one of the side pieces.

"That is right, madam! Pound me over the head. Get the axe and finish me! I might live long enough to tell my friends how I met my death, and have my slayer brought to the bar of justice. Finish your job, madam. There is no one present to witness the consummation of your work!" he roared.

"If I were not a good Christian I would leave your home before the sun went down to-night. It does not seem as if I could endure your cruel taunts another day. So there," she snapped.

"Oh, ho! You are a Christian, are you? I would never have dreamed it. Do Christians knock their husbands out of trees with ladders? If they do, then you are a Christian. Is it the aim of your species of Christians to always be on the alert to murder their husbands? If that is the case, then you are a shining light in the society," he said, as he kicked the ladder off from himself, causing it to fall on Mrs. Wilson's feet.

"Oh, mercy, my feet! Henry Wilson, you did that on purpose! You dare not strike me, and you took that cowardly way for revenge! I will go home to ma! I will never live another day with you," and she began to sob.

"Now, madam, if you feel better, I wish you would step to the house and bring me my crutch and the liniment bottle, and I will try to get indoors," he remarked.

"If you sit there until I wait on you it will be quite late in the evening. If your leg is well enough to kick a ladder on to my feet, it is well enough to wait on yourself," she said, as she limped to the house and he limped away to the barn.

F. D. C.

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THE GREAT SHAH SYNDICATE.

ITS OBJECT—ITS DOINGS—ITS END.

CHAPTER I.

Its Object.

"THEN that's settled!" said the lean man, otherwise Mortimer Fitchett.

"Settled? Yes!" replied the stout man, known in his world as "Captain" Montague. "We're only waiting for the third man of the firm."

"Well—I've found him!"

"Found him! Where?"

"He'll be here in five minutes." (The speaker looked at his watch.) "That's good enough."

"You're a clever one, Fitchett!" said the "Captain." "But where did you pick him up? and—who is he?"

"I've never seen him. As to who he is, Heaven only knows. I don't!"

"You've given our game away to a stranger!" blurted out the other, his face white with apprehension of the strictly self-preservative sort.

"Is Mort. Fitchett a dog that he should do this thing? No! Listen! You know Garraway—'Uncle' Ben—who we badly wanted for a third, but who wouldn't? Well, I met him two days ago in the 'Shamrock,' Jermyn Street."

"You didn't tell me."

"Didn't think it necessary. Garraway said that though he wasn't touching the thing himself, he knew a man—a safe man—who, if I liked, would, he thought, be willing to join the board."

"And you?"

"Well; I did like. 'Uncle' put me on the telephone, at Maiden Lane, in talk with this Lester Wylde (he's a Yank, by the way); and in less than ten minutes, by means of the 'code'—which shows he knows us—we came to terms; he finally agreeing to come here at noon sharp to—— Ah, here he is!"

There had been no audible footsteps on the stairs; no knocking at the room door; no self-announcement. Quietly, silently as a shadow, an uprightly-tall, hatchet-faced, well-dressed man opened the door and noiselessly shut it again.

Then, taking a seat at the table, he, without removing his hat, deliberately lit a cigar and blew a long dense cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"Time?"

He uttered this one word below his breath almost; a faint, and almost enigmatical smile playing about the corners of his firm, thin-lipped mouth.

"Mr. Wylde?" said Fitchett, interrogatively.

"Quite right!"

"Well, my name is Fitchett, and——"

"Your friend is Montague—I beg his pardon—'Captain' Montague."

"How do you know that?" queried Fitchett with suspicious quickness; while the "Captain"—who always played second to his lean acquaintance—regarded the visitor with uneasy bewilderment.

"Gentlemen," said Lester Wylde, "this is child's play. Both of you, I can assure you, are too well-known in *our* circle, to be unfamiliar by name and reputation to me. Please let us to business, for I have a matter of importance to attend to in an hour from now."

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Wylde," said Fitchett, "Ben Garraway has told us that you're a 'square' member, and one who would be likely to go in with us—with the 'Captain' and myself, that is—in a little thing we've got on here just now. All we want is a chap that knows a bit about the East, and can palaver with the natives of——"

"Persia, for instance; yes, I see."

"Persia! Who said Persia?"

"You did—or at least you were going to."

"The dickens!" muttered the "Captain" under his breath, and kicking Fitchett's foot under the table.

"Perhaps you know a little more, as you know so much?" said Fitchett.

"Perhaps I do. But it isn't at all wonderful that I do, seeing that 'Uncle' Ben gave me the outline of your scheme this morning."

"Ah! very good! Ha! ha!" laughed the "Captain"; but a keen observer would have certainly detected an air of disquietude about the gallant gentleman, spite his assumption of hilarity.

"Look here!" said Fitchett, smartly smiting the table with his open palm. "Whether you know it or not, I'll tell you what we propose doing, and leave it to you to join us or not, as you like."

"That's fair!" remarked Wylde.

"You've heard, then," said the lean man, "that the Shah of Persia is, financially, at present in a very bad way?"

"Yes, I've heard that."

"Well, it seems that money is so scarce with him that he's hard put to it to find the cash to buy even a new suit of clothes. Not a shopkeeper in Teheran will trust him; while, to make matters worse for him, his ministers not only keep him a prisoner in his own palace, but do all they can to incite the feelings of his subjects against him."

"Yes. All this is common talk at home and abroad; come to the cream of your ideas."

"It's this. The Shah has belonging to him, as head of the State, something approaching to thirty millions' worth or more of diamonds, and other precious stones and things. We know, the 'Captain' and I, from a Persian, who was lately in the Sailors' Home for Asiatics, but who is now dead, exactly where these jewels are kept, and how they might be transferred to our hands, and brought away to Europe."

"Ah! and what plan do you propose by which to effect this?"

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"This: We are for the time a Financial Syndicate, having for its object the helping of the Shah out of his pecuniary troubles. One of us—you, if you join us, as you are acquainted with that part of the world—journeys to Teheran, obtains audience of the Shah, and proffers the assistance of the Syndicate. Once inside the Palace, and on terms of intimacy with the monarch, we believe, with the knowledge I have referred to, that the thing could be done."

"—'m—perhaps it could. Up to the present, however, I fail to see what part you two gentlemen are to play in the matter?"

"Why," said Montague, a trifle irritably, "we find the money, and accompany you to India, waiting for you in the Ameer's capital."

"Then, as I understand it, you leave the details of the actual acquisition of the treasure to me. Is that so?"

"Well, yes in a way," said Fitchett. "Ben Garraway declares that there is no other man living who could better carry the thing through."

"Much obliged, I'm sure, to 'Uncle', and I shall certainly do my best to deserve his commendation. Now, as to terms, what do you offer?"

"A third of the profits," replied Fitchett. "The sum of two thousand pounds to be paid to you on leaving us at Calcutta, from which point you will journey alone to the Persian capital. This sum will be for travelling and other expenses besides for the necessary 'golden keys' after your arrival at Teheran."

"I see. Well—I accept. When do we start?"

"A week to-morrow," said the "Captain." "You will meet us at Southampton. We shall be at the 'Neptune' hotel, in the names of Doctor Marwick and Professor Hall, scientists proceeding to India. You will join us as our secretary, and play that *rôle* till we part at Calcutta. We shall expect you at noon of that day."

"Good! I will be there," said Lester Wylde, rising. "Good morning, my dear partners!"

"Wait!" said the "Captain," as he touched the electric-bell knob.

"Waiter, a bottle of 'extra dry'!"

In another minute it was brought, opened, and debottled.

"Gentlemen," said the "Captain," raising his glass, "Success to the *Great Shah Syndicate!*"

Each man drained his glass; five minutes later the three, descended the steps of the private hotel in Bishopsgate Street Within, that had been the scene of the meeting; the lean man and his stout comrade turning to go towards Liverpool Street, while Lester Wylde, hailing a hansom, drove rapidly away in the opposite direction.

"Paulton Square, Chelsea, Number seventeen," he had called to the driver through the trap; and as he bowled along westwards, he more than once exultantly exclaimed amid the roar of the traffic:

"Now, Edie, my girl! here's your chance; and it won't be your fault, I know, if you don't make the most of it!"

CHAPTER II.

Its Doings.

AT the railway terminus in Calcutta, three men stood on the departure platform at the open door of a first-class carriage attached to the Northern Mail.

Two of them were talking earnestly to the third member of the group, who, beyond an occasional interjection, appeared to be utterly indifferent to everything and everybody.

"Now, look here, Wylde," said the leanest of the three, "we don't want to waste more time over this business than can be helped, so we shall look to see you on the date agreed upon at Jung Rao, the money-changer's house in Cabool, on the stroke of noon."

Lester Wylde removed the cigar from his lips.

"At noon of that day," he said, quietly rolling the "weed" with his thumb and forefinger, "you will see me—if alive; if anything should happen to me—well—you shall still hear of me."

"Captain" Montague shivered perceptibly at this latter suggestion.

"You won't fail! You *can't* fail!" he hurriedly remarked. "You've as much at stake as we have, barring preliminaries, so if it's only for your own sake you'll do your best for your own skin, and to bring off the deal."

"There!" said Fitchett querulously, "of course he will! Don't be a fool, Monty!"

No one of them save Wylde, had observed a young English girl of attractive personality—dark, piquant, *petite*, sitting, surrounded with feminine impedimenta, in a far corner of the carriage, and in the shadow of the darkened "jalousies."

Could the lean man and the stout but have witnessed the greeting of Wylde by the lady, as the train steamed out of the station, it would certainly have been an eye-opener for the precious pair.

"My dear," said Lester, "you have managed beautifully all through. Our two very clever friends have no more idea that the charming young lady, their fellow-passenger, and table acquaintance on board the *Syria*, was the little wife of Philip Lester, alias Lester Wylde, than that—well—that I am *not* that which I profess to be."

"Now, tell me," said the girl (she was barely twenty), "as we are alone, what you wish of me."

"It's very simple, Edie. On our arrival at Teheran—if we ever get there—I shall carry out so much of our friends' programme as relates to my character of confidential agent of the Syndicate, and as will be sufficient to gain me an entry into his Imperial Majesty's domestic preserves. You, then, at the proper moment will appear on the scene as an English lady doctor, who is desirous of establishing herself in the Shah's capital. This will, I think, as it did in the case of the late Ameer of Afghanistan, be more than agreeable to him—for English 'medicine' and its professors, are valued the world over."

"Yes—and then?"

"Then—it will be for you to create a feeling in the monarch's mind that he is suffering from some chronic malady or other; dose him well, and so on; but, above all, keep about him, and—well—worm out of him all you can relative to his treasures."

"I see. It's risky, Phil; but what about the other two—and—and you?"

"That's a secret, my dear—for the present. For myself, I shall always be within call of you, and at the precise moment when you signify that you have got the "Open Sesame" I shall be ready to avail myself of the opportunity, and to bring you off with what we have come for!"

* * * * *

For once, things worked themselves out just as Wylde had planned.

Arrived at Teheran, he sought the good offices (backing

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his efforts with a vigorous twist of the "golden key") of one of the Shah's most influential ministers, the Deputy Grand Vizier.

There was evidently some connection between this individual and Jung Tao of Cabool, for the latter's name mentioned, as per Fitchett's instructions, the Persian official was not only amenable, but deferential.

The next day but one after his interview with the Deputy, Wylde was admitted to an audience with the successor of Darius.

What actually took place on the occasion has never transpired.

The one important result was, however, the Royal command for the attendance, at an early date, of Doctor Edith Wells, at the Palace.

Things moved rapidly after this, in somewhat inverse ratio to the usual course of Eastern procedure, which is generally slow, and never sure.

Just three weeks after the instalment at Court of "Doctor" Wells as Lady Physician Extraordinary, Wylde, who, through his new friend the Deputy Vizier, had been in daily communication with his wife, received an intimation, through the same source that the "Open Sesame" was in her possession, and that if he would be at midnight on the outside of the garden gate leading into the private pavilion assigned to her for a residence, he would be conducted to her by a black deaf mute.

She would then give him such information as would enable him to remove without hindrance the bulk of the Imperial treasure.

Wylde, disguised in a "kaftan" and long native robe, his skin darkened to the necessary shade, at midnight stood in the shadow of the gate embrasure.

When the door cautiously opened a black hand and arm dragged him inside, and within three minutes he was in Edie's presence.

Then she told him how that a long underground tunnel led from the Shah's private apartment to the treasure-room immediately under the pavilion where they then were.

She had accidentally discovered this while attending upon his Majesty.

She had also, as accidentally, found out that an outlet to this tunnel existed, by means of a cunningly devised trap-door, in one of the rooms of the pavilion itself.

What followed is now matter of Persian history, although the main facts did not come out till many months after the event.

* * * * *

The caravan route through Bagdad and Damascus to Aleppo, is a roundabout way from Persia to Europe, and, more than that, a way full of ruts and pitfalls.

It is not often that Europeans travel by it, so that the spectacle of an Englishman and his wife, with five camel-loads of baggage, doing the journey as part and parcel of the ordinary caravan, was not only unusual but curious.

Between Aleppo and Marseilles there is an intermittent steamboat service, principally for mails.

By one of the boats of this line the Englishman and his wife travelled from Apello to the French port.

It is known that—staying in the city for a couple of days—the pair sailed, by a Messagerie Maritimes steamer, for New York.

There all traces of them were lost.

Six months later, one Cyrus Hoffman, and his beautiful young wife, established themselves in the City of the Golden Horn as social leaders of wealth beyond calculation.

Cyrus Hoffman is credited with having made his money in "Oil"; certainly he holds "Standard" oil shares to an amount equal almost to that possessed by another well-known American millionaire.

Mrs. Hoffman is celebrated for her diamonds, which exceed in beauty, brilliancy, number and value, anything ever before or nowadays seen throughout the American continent

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CHAPTER III.

Its End.

MORTIMER FITCHETT and "Captain" Montague are sitting, one on either side the table, in the self-same private room at the hotel in Bishopsgate Street Within, where we first saw them.

They had been silent for some time.

On the table lay a letter, and it was easy to see, by the disgusted glances each man every now and then cast at it, that it was the prime cause of their depressed and miserable state of spirits.

"Monty," said Fitchett at last, "it's no use crying over it now it's done. We must make the best of it."

"Make the best of it!" retorted the other savagely. "It was you who introduced this Wylde into the scheme; it's you, therefore, that's responsible for its upset!"

"I know! I know! But how could I tell that Garraway was mistaken in his man? Well, he wasn't mistaken, in a way, for he went one better than us—that's all."

"All! Just think of us two fools, waiting, lamblike, in Cabool for a man and millions that were travelling as fast as money could take them in the very opposite direction. It's enough to make one commit suicide!"

"Well, you can do as you like. I'm just as mad as you are; and I've lost just as much as you, too; but, who knows, some day we may come across Mr. Lester Wylde, and—well, then it won't be good for him, I think—at least, speaking for myself, it won't!"

Here Fitchett took up the letter, and read it again.

The post-mark on the letter had been "Southampton," but in addition there were certain other marks notifying that the letter had been collected by the mail at sea.

It ran:—

"MY DEAR PARTNER —

"I have not very much to say, beyond thanking you very much for your kind furnishing of the means which have enabled me to successfully carry out the little Persian scheme, which I, myself, had had in mind for at least a year before you yourselves woke to the possibilities of it.

"I do not propose to return you your generous contribution to the sinews of war, as I am of opinion that a little 'backwater' of this sort will be a lesson to you, and a warning to you to be more careful in the future when taking in a 'third partner.'

"My wife, the lady next to whom 'Captain' you sat at table on board the *Syria*, joins with me in wishing you both all the future business success you undoubtedly deserve, only advising you, for your own sakes, and if you desire to retain your heads upon your shoulders, to strike out Persia from any list you may be forming of possible fields of operation.

"We shall often think of you, and at festival times drink many a bumper to the 'long life' and 'prosperity' of 'The Great ——— Syndicate'!

RALPH ENDERBY.

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A Question - - - - of Guilt.

I.—Smoke.

On a certain wet February afternoon, not many years ago, Richard Monk, M.D., ascended the steps of the house in which lived his eccentric aunt, Miss Selina Rookwood, and rang the bell. The doctor's visit was in response to a note which he had received but a few hours previously, requesting him to call as soon as possible. When the young physician was ushered into his aunt's presence, that lady was just giving her companion certain shopping directions. He could not avoid overhearing the conclusion of her remarks, to the effect that "from the milliner's you go to the chemist's and ask him to make me up my medicine; while he is doing that go to the post-office and post the letters and buy me some stamps; from there go back to the chemist's, where the medicine will probably be ready; then stop at the railway station and see if those two parcels have arrived for me, and then come back at once—now, do you think that you can remember all that?" Upon receiving an affirmative reply, Kate Clare was told to go, and the old lady turned her attention to her nephew.

It has already been stated that Miss Selina Rookwood was eccentric; it should now be added that she was also very wealthy, and that her only near relation was her nephew. She was a tall, thin woman, with a nose resembling a beak and a voice that was remarkable for its shrillness. As she had never been able to secure a husband, she devoted her entire attention to entomological research, and the walls of her rooms were lined with glass cases in which reposed all classes of *coleoptera* and *hymenoptera*, with pins and needles stuck through their bodies. So extensive was her collection that she had been elected an honorary member of various entomological societies, and although scientists frequently paid her visits to examine her rare specimens of African and South American beetles and butterflies, she was without honour among the unappreciative townspeople, who irreverently styled her "the insect collector."

Miss Selina, moreover, had a very disagreeable way of letting her nephew know that her fortune, or at least the greater part of it, might be left to some museum or scientific body if he did not accede to her whims in every respect.

"So you have come at last," she snapped out; "you needn't take off your coat, for what I have to say will take but a very few moments, and it is probably the very last time that I shall ever care to see you or speak to you." Then, noticing a surprised look on her nephew's face, she continued: "Is all this true that I have heard, that you are engaged to be married to Prof. Strang's daughter? Didn't you think it worth your while to consult me first?"

"But, my dear aunt," he began.

"Don't 'dear aunt' me," she replied, and she worked herself into a passion that turned her face scarlet; "do you think that I would allow you to marry the daughter of that man? That man who ridicules my collections, and——"

"Really, Aunt Selina, won't you allow me to explain——"

"I want no explanation from you. Answer me, are you engaged to her or not?"

"My dear aunt, you should not excite yourself so, I——"

"Will you answer my question? Yes or no?"

"Yes, I am engaged to——"

"Then go!" she fairly screamed, and pointed with her long finger to the door. "Go, I say, and to-morrow I shall send for my lawyer, and have my will altered. What? Are you still here? Go! Go! I say!"

And Mr. Richard Monk, seeing what a passion she was in, and thinking that his presence would only excite her more, rapidly walked out of the house into the street.

II.—Sparks.

The afternoon had not advanced very far, and the doctor meditated as to where he should go next; he walked slowly down the street towards that portion of the town which was occupied chiefly by the shopkeepers. He

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was pale and nervous, irritated and undecided. His hands were in the pockets of his overcoat, and were both tightly clenched. Mechanically, he repeated his aunt's last words: "She said, 'to-morrow I shall send for my lawyer and have my will altered,' then there must be a will now, and I am evidently handsomely remembered. The new will which she intends to execute to-morrow will probably leave all or at least the greater part of her fortune to those butterfly-chasers and insect collectors. But if she shouldn't make a will then I——"

Glancing ahead he saw Kate Clare, his aunt's maid, entering the chemist's door. He waited patiently till she came out, and then approached the door and looked in.

Kate by this time had disappeared round the corner. Nobody was inside but the old chemist; he was a personal friend of the young doctor, and compounded nearly all of the latter's prescriptions. Doctor Monk went in, and sauntered to the back of the shop; he said good-afternoon to the proprietor.

The elder man noticed the pale appearance of the younger one, and remarked:

"Well, well, whatever is the matter? You look terribly shaken up. Better fix up something for yourself."

Monk replied to the effect that nothing was the matter with himself, and as the chemist was just beginning to compound the tonic for Miss Rookwood, he stood by his side and watched him. The prescription was written by a physician from a neighbouring town; it was dated some time previously, and was pasted in a large old-fashioned scrap-book. Monk could not avoid reading some of the ingredients—"Acid Tannic gr. i., Syr. Yerba Santo oz., iii, sulph. quin. gr. xliv."

The chemist had begun, and every few seconds he held his graduated glass above his head to see that the proportions were properly observed. Both men were hidden from view by a row of shelves on which reposed bottles, pots, and small jars. The younger man was now reading the titles, and could his thoughts have been photographed or printed, they would look something like this:

"Pretty good collection for such a small place—Yes, that solution is better than the other—ah, he didn't have that the other day—I must recommend him to get—hello; sulph. morph. and sulph. quin. side by side on the shelf—wouldn't do that—look exactly alike, too—if I—no, no, it's too horrible to think about——"

Why did the front door open at that moment and a customer enter? Why did the chemist hasten to the front of the shop to attend to him, leaving the prescription half-finished in the graded phial?

Dr. Monk's hands trembled violently as he helped himself to a glass of port wine, and when he left the shop a few minutes later, the chemist muttered:

"Well, he looked pretty badly shaken up when he came in, but now he looks like Robinson Crusoe did when he saw the footprints of the savages."

But then the old chemist did not know that his unfinished prescription had four grains of morphine added to it since he saw it last.

III.—Flame.

AT eight o'clock the next morning Dr. Monk received a message from Kate Clare informing him of the death of his aunt. He hastily dressed himself, and proceeded at once to her residence, where he found that a messenger had been dispatched for the coroner. Going to his aunt's room, he saw the old lady in her bed, white and rigid, and his professional knowledge told him that she had evidently been dead some hours.

On the table by her bedside stood a clock, a glass of water, some spoons, and several bottles of medicine. One of these he recognised by the label and date as coming from the local chemist. It was uncorked, and about a tablespoonful of the contents was missing. The Doctor carefully recorked it, and then slipped it into his inner overcoat pocket.

An inquest was held at ten o'clock the following morning.

The doctor was the first witness called. He described in detail the interview he had with his aunt on the preceding afternoon but one. To various queries he replied that he had repeatedly warned the deceased of the danger of rupturing a blood-vessel during one of her periods of uncontrollable temper; deceased could get into a rage about trifles; witness was not her family physician, and had never been consulted by her in a professional capacity; took no interest in entomological research himself, but had been the means on three or four occasions of enabling his aunt to add to her collections; did not know exactly how much money she had, but supposed it was considerable; had not seen her will, and could not state what disposition she intended to make of her property.

A juryman then asked:

"Now, doctor, when you left there on the afternoon preceding your aunt's death, did you seriously think that she would carry her threat of disinheriting you you into execution?"

"I seriously thought that if I stayed away for a week or ten days, and she heard nothing of my movements, she would probably relent to some extent; at least, I think she would have sent for me and made some concessions."

The coroner then asked:

"When was your marriage to Miss Fanny Strang to take place?"

"The exact date has not yet been fixed. This affair will, of course, postpone it for at least a year."

This ended the doctor's testimony, and several neighbours were next called upon to give their versions as to the habits and characteristics of the deceased. They all concurred that deceased had ungovernable outbursts of passion; in other respects she was an educated, well-bred woman.

The last witness summoned was Miss Kate Clare, and, in reply to queries, she stated that she was housekeeper, companion, and general maid-of-all-work to the deceased; did not know what passed between aunt and nephew that afternoon, as she had been sent into the town to do some shopping; scarcely a day passed that deceased had not scolded her for negligence or inattention, and sometimes for the merest trifles; deceased had not told her what passed when the doctor called; had called on her mistress shortly before she went to bed, and was ordered to leave the room at once, as it would be necessary for her to be up very early; deceased paid her wages promptly, and had frequently remarked that she would leave witness something; witness had weak lungs; physicians had informed her that consumption might develop.

The testimony closed here and the jury retired to the room where the dead woman lay. Neither the doctor nor Miss Clare had made any reference to the medicine which Miss Rookwood was accustomed to take. The

last witness, in describing her movements that afternoon, did not think it necessary to inform the jurymen that she had called upon the chemist. Doctor Monk seemed surprised, when he heard her statement, but thought it best to say nothing. "Does she suspect me, and is she trying to shield me?" he asked himself.

The jury returned in about fifteen minutes, and brought in a verdict that "deceased had come to her death through heart disease, caused by undue excitement."

After Miss Selina Rookwood was buried, her will was produced by her lawyer, and when this document was read, it was discovered that with the exception of her entomological collections (which were bequeathed to some scientific institution), and a handsome legacy to Miss Clare, her entire possessions passed into the hands of her nephew. The latter sold the house, and by the advice of a fellow-physician, he went into Switzerland to repair his constitution.

IV.—Embers.

ABOUT four months after the events just narrated, Herr Andreas Fussli, the proprietor of Der Rothe Ochse, one of the smaller hotels situated on the single narrow street which the village of Zermatt possesses, was busily engaged in copying extracts from an "Improved Letter-Writer for Polite Correspondence." He found it a difficult matter to convey the information he desired to impart, as he was compelled to take portions of several letters in the book before him and fit them together. When, therefore, his writing was finished, it read as follows:

"Zermatt, June 26th, 19—.

"*To the Hochwohlgeborone Fraulein Fanny Strang:*

"Be prepared, my dear Fraulein, to receive information of a most unpleasant nature. Remember, as the Scriptures have it, that man is born to die and to be born again. It is with feelings consisting of an admixture of sorrow and commiseration that I must impart to you the news of the untimely demise of a certain Doctor Richard Monk, whose earthly remains now lie in my back parlour awaiting interment in the English cemetery. The doctor was brought here late last night, suffering from internal injuries, which he had received when he slipped from the steps cut in the snow-slope at the shoulder of the Matterhorn. A physician was immediately summoned, but the sufferer died shortly afterwards. He murmured your name several times, as well as the words 'ant' and 'morphine.' (*Nota Bene.*—It is too cold for ants in this place, and the physician would not give him any morphine.) Letters from you and a considerable sum of money were found in his clothes. I await your further instructions in this painful affair, and sign myself, your obedient servant.

"ANDREAS FUSSLI."

"*Post Scriptum.*—Pardon, if you please, any grammatical inaccuracies which in my epistle following may occur. My letter-writer did not possess any example to fit, and I alone, with my French-English Dictionnaire, did make him fit.

"P.S. Number 2.—I wish to say there is due to me the sum of francs 460. Shall I take this from Mr. Monk's trousers?

"P.S. Number 3.—Some of my cards I inclose if you should visit Zermatt. My prices are very reasonable, and I have a *chef* who was waiter in a London hotel once formerly."

V.—Ashes.

THE summer had gone and the death of Doctor Monk was no longer the subject which engaged the minds of the townspeople. The clergyman had briefly alluded to the affair in one of his sermons; Miss Strang was still mourning for her lover, and the property and money of Miss Selina Rookwood's nephew passed into the hands of some distant relative. The matter was pretty well forgotten, when it was as suddenly revived—this time once more through the medium of a letter which the chemist received. It was not only a letter but a confession of guilt from the conscience-stricken Miss Clare. This document was dated from Melbourne, and, after stating that the writer had seen the death of Doctor Monk, and that she herself was a victim of consumption, it concluded as follows:—

"Now that I know that I have not much longer to live, it is only fair that I make known to you a dreadful secret which weighs upon my mind. Miss Rookwood was always good to me and even remembered me in her will; otherwise I would be absolutely penniless to-day. I did not deserve such kindness, for I was the means of causing her death. She often scolded me for my negligence and disorderly methods, and on that fatal night she was the victim of my carelessness.

"On seeing her in bed that evening she was very excited and talked bitterly about her nephew; I attempted to quiet her, but she would listen to nothing from me, and finally ordered me to leave the room and go to bed as she would want me early in the morning. I did so, but omitted to give her the medicine which the doctor had strictly enjoined me to do, and which I had brought home with me in the afternoon. You know the rest; the next morning she was dead, and if she had taken her customary tonic, perhaps she would be alive to-day.

"The coroner's jury stated that she had expired from some apoplectic stroke caused by her outbursts of rage and her excited condition. But I know better. I was the first one to enter that room of death in the morning, and I saw the bottle of medicine there untouched and unopened. Thinking that I might be questioned at the inquest, I took out the cork, filled the tablespoon, and scattered the medicine on the floor. I left the nearly filled bottle and the spoon on the table. Afterwards both were missing, but I do not know who took them."

The writer then reiterated her sorrow, and the letter concluded with a wish that she hoped to be forgiven.

The chemist exonerated her from all blame, and when he showed the letter to the clergyman, he remarked:

"Poor girl, she should not have taken the matter so seriously. The fact that Miss Rookwood did not receive her usual tonic that night could scarcely have caused her death. By the way, do you know that that medicine was the cause of my losing my best graduated glass? Miss Clare came to me that afternoon, and I began to mix the ingredients for the prescription; I was called away for a few minutes, and when I resumed my work my graduated glass was standing close to the edge of the counter.

"Doctor Monk was there at the time, and he may have moved it. I reached above my head, somewhat in front of me, and took down the sulphate of quinine. As I did so my elbow struck the glass and knocked it on the floor. My finest glass was broken, the contents spilt all over, and I was compelled to make that prescription again—a thing that rarely happens to me."

A. R. F.

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HOW I USED MY INDIAN CLUBS.

THOUGH of a timid nature, I am proud of my muscular development, which I seek to increase by the regular use of Indian clubs.

On one memorable night, and one only, have I found it necessary to use one of those formidable weapons which habit has rendered familiar to my hand.

The grey of morning had just begun to steal into our bedchamber when Mrs. B. ejaculated with unusual vigour:

"Henry, Henry, they are in the drawing-room, and they have just knocked down the screen."

"My love," I was about to observe, "your imaginative powers have now arrived at the pitch of clairvoyance," when a noise from the room beneath us, as if all the fire-irons had gone off together with a bang, compelled me to acknowledge to myself that there was something in Mrs. B.'s alarms at last.

I trod downstairs as noiselessly as I could, and in almost utter darkness. The drawing-room door was ajar, and through the crevice I could distinguish, despite the gloom, as many as three muffled figures. They were all of them in black clothing, and each wore over his face a mask of crepe, fitting quite closely to his features.

I had never been confronted by anything so dreadful before. Mrs. B. had cried "Wolf!" so often, that I had almost ceased to believe in wolves of this description at all.

Unused to personal combat, and embarrassed by the novel circumstances under which I found myself, I was standing undecided on the landing, when I heard the well-known whispers of "Henry, Henry," from the upper storey. The burglars caught it also. They desisted from their occupation of examining the articles of value upon the chimney-piece, while their fiendish countenances relaxed into a hideous grin.

One of them stole cautiously towards the door where I was standing. I heard his burglarious feet, I heard the "Henry, Henry!" still going on from above stairs; I heard my own heart go pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat within me. It was one of those moments in which one lives a life.

The head of the creped marauder was projected cautiously round the door as if to listen. I poised my weapon, and brought it down with unerring aim upon his skull. He fell like a bullock beneath the axe, and I sped up to my bedchamber with all the noiselessness and celerity of a bird. It was I who locked the door this time, and pulled the washhand-stand, two boxes, and a chair against it with the speed of lightning.

Was Mrs. B. out of her mind with terror that, at such an hour as that, she should indulge in a paroxysm of mirth?

"Good gracious," I cried, "be calm my love; there are burglars in the house at last."

"My dear Henry," she answered, laughing so that the tears quite stood in her eyes, "I am very sorry; I tried to call you back. But, when I sent you downstairs, I quite forgot that this was the morning upon which I had ordered the sweeps!"

One of those gentlemen was at that moment lying underneath with his skull fractured, and it cost me £15 to get it mended.

T. L. F.

Millionaire Carnegie's Opinion of Happiness.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie was interviewed the other day by a representative of the *Church Family Newspaper*. The conversation turned on the secret of happiness.

"Then the secret of happiness," queried the reporter, "is, in your opinion——"

"A good conscience and a good digestion," came the ready reply. Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness will ensure the latter, and by so doing have restored happiness in hundreds of cases, where disorder of the digestive system and liver, weakness, and Summer-end fag have rendered it impossible. All sufferers from digestive troubles and that used-up sensation known as Summer-end fag will find a forcible illustration of the curative power of Bile Beans in the following case: Miss May Musson lives at 26 Breach Road, Marlpool, Derbyshire. To-day she is enjoying splendid health, but she says—to use her own words to a *Derbyshire Advertiser* reporter:—"A short time back I was in a most deplorable condition. I was a sufferer from indigestion, anæmia, and debility. I did not have these ailments in small measure either! No matter what I ate, the pains after it were terrible. Indeed, I became so bad that I could not take a morsel of solid food.

"To such an extent did my strength fail, that if I walked a short distance I was thoroughly exhausted. Every little effort fagged me terribly, and caused me great distress. I had a severe pain in my left side which hurt me whenever I moved; and, what with one thing and another, I was far more like an old woman nearing the end of her days than a woman of 22 years. I was told that I had enlarged liver. Whatever it was which occasioned the pain I suffered, it seemed as if nothing I took would remove it. One day I saw Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness advertised in the newspapers, and made up my mind to give them a trial. When I had finished the first box I felt better and got more. Each box of Beans made me better and better until the neighbours began to notice how vastly I was improving. First one and then another would say, "You do look different now." Whatever I looked, I know I felt different; and in the end I was completely cured. Never in all my life have I felt so well as I do at the present moment. I am sure I owe my life to Charles Forde's Bile Beans and I do all I can to let others know of them." It is by effecting such cures as the above that Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness have made their world-wide reputation. They are without doubt superior to all known medicines for indigestion, anæmia, debility, summer-end fag, dizziness, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, palpitation, headache, nervousness, all female ailments, blood impurities, rheumatism and sleeplessness. All chemists stock them or you may obtain direct from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending price one and three half-pence or two and ninepence.

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 27th. Postcards only, please.

Mother Knew.

TEACHER: "Willie, does your mother know that the buttons are off your coat?" Willie: "Yes'm, and she knows where they are, too." Teacher: "Where are they?" Willie: "They are on father's trousers."

Too Literal.

SCENE: A Coffee Room. Customer (who has been long waiting): "I say, waiter, how long will my chop be?" Waiter: "About four inches and a 'arf, sir!" (Customer is comforted.)

Outrageous.

"WHAT'S the matter, Brush? You look sad." "I am sad. I decorated a set of soup plates for Mrs. Hoodelle, and what do you suppose she did with them?" "Give it up. What?" "Used them for soup!"

A Musical Cupboard.

A LITTLE boy, on coming home from church where he had seen a person work the bellows of the organ, said to his mother, "Oh, mamma, I wish you had been at church to-day. Such fun! A man pumped music out of an old cupboard!"

Papa was a Coal Merchant.

"DOES it not throw a shade of bitterness into your heart," she said, "to see the trees all leafless, and to hear the wind sighing for ever in mournful monotony? Does it not make you feel that there is too much that is bleak in the world?" "No," he answered, "it weally does not." "Why?" "Because my papa is in the coal business."

A Good Advertisement.

"WHY do they not put up some protection, a rail, anything, in a dangerous spot like this?" inquired the personally conducted tourist on a mountain side in Switzerland. "Well," replied the guide; "there has been some talk about it; but the commune thought it would do harm to the neighbourhood. You see, an accident or two every season gets the place talked about."

Obeying the Priest.

AN Irishman made a sudden rush into a doctor's house, took from his pocket a soda-water bottle, filled to the brim with some pure liquid, and handing it across the counter, exclaimed: "There, doctor, sniff that, will you?" The doctor did as he was directed, and pronounced the liquid to be genuine whisky. "Thank you, doctor," said the Irishman. "Hand it to me again, if you please." The doctor again did as directed, and asked what he meant. "Och, thin," said Pat, "if you will have it, the priest told me not to drink any of this unless I got it from the doctor. So here's your health and the priest's health."

Could Tell the Difference Now.

VISITOR: "So your brother is taking lessons on the violin. Is he making progress?" Little Girl: "Yes, he's got so far now we can tell whether he is tuning or playing."

An "Up" One.

HE (who on her recommendation has sent her to choose her own birthday present): "Good gracious, six pounds for a bonnet! Why, you told me you could get one for ten shillings." She: "Yes, ten shillings and up. This is an 'up.'"

Natural Conclusion.

MR. SOFTLEIGH: "Tommy, do you really think your sister likes to see me better than she does Mr. Biggs?" Tommy: "I'm sure of it, for in the evenings when he's in the parlour she turns the light down so low she can't see him at all."

Paddy Had Him.

"OCH, now, an' pwhat are iggs to-day, Mister Doolan?" asked Paddy, entering the grocer's shop. "Eggs are eggs to-day," replied the shopman, looking triumphantly at two or three lady customers, who smiled sweetly. "Sure, an' I'm moighty glad to hear it. The last 'iggs I had from here were nearly chickens."

Too Industrious.

A SERVANT girl returned to the employment agency and said she had been discharged from her place because she was too industrious. "Why, how can that be? What did you do?" "Why, they told me to clean the house. I cleaned all upstairs, and then went down into the cellar and dusted and washed all the bottles in the wine cellar, and they discharged me!"

Sufficient Reason.

MAN (to acquaintance): "Hello, Grinsley, how are you getting on?" Grinsley: "So, so, only." Man: "Are you still running that woman's rights paper?" Grinsley: "No; I have given that up." Man: "Didn't pay, eh?" Grinsley: "Oh, yes; it paid very well." Man: "Why didn't you continue to run it?" Grinsley: "I got married."

Not His Heart.

THEY were sitting in the moonlight on the rocks. "Angelina," whispered Ernest. "you know I love you! Will you be mine?" "Alas, Ernest, I fear it cannot be!" "Ah," gasped Ernest, placing his hands on his breast, "broken at last!" "What?" screamed the girl, throwing her arms about his neck, and her breath coming in great panting sobs. "I did not mean it, Ernest! Oh, speak! Tell me what is broken! Is it your heart?" "No, my darling; only my collar-stud. I felt it slip."

They were Used to It.

THEY approached each other from opposite directions. One was pale as a ghost, the other red as fire. Presently they met, and, careless of the fact that dozens of eyes were upon them, they kissed each other. The meeting seemed to bring them perfect peace. But, alas and alack! they had been together scarcely twenty seconds when up came a man with a stick. He struck a sharp, quick blow, and the pale one was sent spinning several feet away. The other neither screamed nor fainted; there was no tear-shedding, no heart-breaking, no resentment, not even a murmur. Billiard-balls are used to that sort of thing.

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"A PEARL BEYOND PRICE."—35 Aberdeen Road, Cotham, Bristol, December 23rd, 1901. Mrs. E. C. Parsons regards "Tatcho" as a pearl beyond price. In her opinion everybody desiring to cultivate, improve, or retain a good head of hair should try it.

"3 SEPARATE HAIRDRESSERS."—Rostherne, St. Stephen's Road, Bournemouth, November 30th, 1901. Mrs. Lloyd wants to give three bottles of "Tatcho" to some friends here, as a lady in the house is strongly recommending it, and says that three separate hairdressers tell her what a wonderful growth of new hair she has.

"A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY."—Lyss Place, Liss, Hants, November 30th, 1901. I find "Tatcho" a most excellent and pleasing application for the hair; in fact, a wonderful discovery which ought to be very widely known.—H. PELHAM PAPILLON.

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Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Walmall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 2lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

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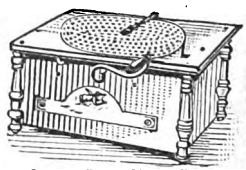

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ANY DOCTOR WILL TELL YOU, "there is no better Cough Medicine."—One gives relief: if you suffer from cough try them but once; they *will* cure, and they *will not* injure your health; an increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 13½d. tins.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, care of the Editor of *Short Stories*.—MADGE MORRIS.]

"**S. P. T.**"—Yours is certainly a difficult position. A girl who is always running after a man, and giving him presents, is quite sure to prove her own enemy, and defeat her own ends. As you really feel that you have no love to offer her, I should tell her so frankly, unpleasant though the task will be. Make your parents understand that she is not the sort of girl you could ever care for, and they will most probably cease to encourage her.

"**Polly.**"—If both you and your lover are wishing to be friends again, and both feel diffident about saying so, I should advise you to write and tell him that you have come to the conclusion that it was very silly to quarrel over such a trifle as his younger brother seeing you home, and that you are willing to forgive and forget it if he is.

"**Which is the best time to marry?**" asks Ena. ——Whenever things seem opportune, my dear Ena. Few girls are inclined to sit down and ask themselves this question in cold blood. I should imagine that you are not engaged, or if so, have entered into the thing in a very philosophical spirit. Generally speaking, early spring is the best. Then you have all the external joys of Nature to accompany your realisation of love's dream. With all the outdoor recreations to share with each other, such as cycling, walking, driving, boating, the possibilities of any disturbance of that dream are less than if accompanied by the fog, cold, and damp of winter. And we all know how important it is to get over the early stages of marriage without a "tiff." Then when winter does come, you will have accustomed yourself to each other, and will take to fireside pleasures and winter enjoyments and responsibilities as a natural sequence and pleasant variant. But a marriage in winter, when all is drear and dark, when fog chokes one, when microbes are getting active, and household expenses and bothers are greater than in summer, may be the prelude to ill temper and perhaps divergence which joyous spring drives away. So, if your man did really pop the question under the mistletoe a week or so back, and you have an active interest in this question, I advise you to wait till Easter, when the new year will be old and pleasant enough to beam on you.

"**Ethel**" wants to know if a country girl is not more precluded from the chanced of meeting eligible suitors than a town girl?——Do not be despondent. Your case appears very much worse than it is. Living in the country is not necessarily prejudicial to a girl's meeting eligible suitors. In fact, I think the reverse is the case. You will find that the proportion of old maids in the country is less than in towns. Sooner or later the right man turns up, so don't be worried. Perhaps you do not meet so many men as a London girl, but perhaps you are all the better for that. Meeting a lot of men does not necessarily lead to marriage. I myself know a family of three girls who have all their lives lived in the remotest country districts. Now all are well and happily married. Had they lived in town they might have had many flirtations and become experts at that pastime, but is it not better to meet few men and true than many and unreliable? In the case of my friends, visits from men were few and far between, yet, somehow or other, when they did appear, they turned out to be, from a girl's point of view, worth a dozen of the town butterflies a London girl encounters.

You say "Maud H.," that you are engaged to a man who has been abroad for over four years, and yet you have allowed another man to make love to you and kiss you and have promised to marry him. How girls can be so deceitful, is beyond me! If you love him really better than the man you are engaged to, your only honourable course is to write and tell him that you are tired of waiting for him, and have decided to return all his gifts and letters, asking him to forgive the pain you have caused him. Think well, however, before doing this, as a man who persistently makes love to a girl, knowing her to be engaged to another, is guilty of such underhand conduct as proves him to be the sort of man not greatly to be trusted. No wonder you feel dissatisfied at what you have done.

"**J. E. C.**" passed a young lady who bowed to him, without noticing her. It afterwards occurred to him that she was none other than a girl he loved when a boy. How can he remedy his apparent slight?——I should advise you to send a line to the lady on general subjects, wishing her a happy New Year, and mention incidentally that it only occurred to you after she had passed the other day that the young lady who smiled so sweetly was none other than herself, your early love, and attribute it to your short-sightedness. If you word it very nicely, she may overlook your offence, and perhaps ask you to tea, in which case you will be able to resume the love-making operations you had to break off previously.

The Brain Gymnasium.

IN these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, No. 25—30," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 3rd, 1902.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 25. WORD SQUARE.

Form a double word square with the following letters. The connecting word means a joining:

AAAA B EEEE GG II LLL MM NNNNN
OOOO RR TT

No. 26. SELECTED WORDS.

From each of the following sentences select a word. Write the words thus selected in a column, when the first letter of each, if the words are correct, will spell the name of a well-known town in the United Kingdom:

1. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
2. He that fights and runs away will live to fight another day.
3. A friend in need is a friend indeed.
4. Too many cooks spoil the broth.
5. A stitch in time saves nine.
6. To be or not to be.
7. Every cloud has a silver lining.

No. 27. ARITHMETICAL PUZZLE.

How can the number 45 be divided into four such parts that if you add 2 to the first part, subtract 2 from the second part, multiply the third part by 2, and divide the fourth part by 2, the total of the addition, the remainder of the subtraction, the product of the multiplication, and the quotient of the division are all equal.

No. 28. CHARADE.

My whole is under my second, and surrounds my first.

No. 29. ADDED LETTERS.

One-sixth of reason, plus two-ninths of splendour, plus one-third of famous, plus one-fifth of decapitate, plus two-fifths of fatal, plus one-third of tender. The whole will form a word meaning revive.

No. 30. SENTENCE-MAKING.

The following words when re-arranged will form a sentence:

Precedent of railways ten in wealthy have saloon as America some Britain the more own fitted-up enormous have at the different royal which carriages following their luxuriously built been expense in of the by upper railway.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 7 to 12.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. J. S. Ryan, of 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.

Gold-plated Pencil-cases have been sent to:
Miss M. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Miss D. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Mrs. E. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.
Mrs. E. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham.
Miss V. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
J. J. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
D. G. Jelley, 3 Cautwell Road, Plumstead.
Miss Richardson, Wycar House, Bedale, Yorks.
E. Luck, 145 Hazelbury Road, Fulham.
E. Hutchings, 1 Hope Cottage, Milton Road, Mill Hill.

SOLUTIONS.

7. S airey Gamp.
C ricket on the Hearth.
R ome.
O liver Twist.
O liver Cromwell.
G ulliver's Travels.
E vangeline.
Lady of the Lake.

9. Pericarp.

10. Novelties.
Pedestrianism.
Contagion.
Misletoe.
Coagulate.
Depreciates.
Prerogative.
Sentimentalists.
Indefatigable.
Monarch.
Discretion.

11.
DUDE DOOR
USES OTHO
DENS OHIO
ESSEVEROOM
VALE
ELLA
STAREADARE
TALE ACID
ALES RIND
REST EDDY

12. Adelaide. Florence. Blue. Red. Jersey. Morocco. Ulster. Pearl. Green. Organ. Turkey. Sandwich. Tokay. Salmon. Leghorn. Iceland. Dresden. Ware. Moon. Snow. Farewell.

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MAN'S INFLUENCE OVER MAN.

Remarkable Words on Personal Magnetism from an Eminent Divine.

No subject has excited so much interest or awakened so much discussion among thinking people of late as that of Personal Magnetism. It is worthy of note that clergymen, doctors, college presidents, and men of science everywhere are giving it deep thought. Many of them have openly certified to its wonderful powers. The outspoken words of the Rev. Paul Weller of Gorham, N.Y., in this connection will call forth no little additional comment.

REV. PAUL WELLER.

In answer to a personal letter from an intimate friend, asking if it were true that he (Rev. Mr. Weller) had become a firm believer in Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism Rev. Weller wrote:

"The facts are: The subject of Personal Magnetism or Hypnotism, to which I have devoted many years of study, was recently more forcibly than ever called to my attention through reading a scientific work on the subject, now being circulated by the New York Institute of Science of Rochester, N.Y.

"I am a minister of the Gospel, but I do not hesitate to say that the reading of that book and the subsequent study of its contents have worked an all-powerful, important and good influence over me. My recommendation of Personal Magnetism, a subject every man and woman may study with profit, is made after thorough investigation and with complete knowledge of its great value. I make this statement deliberately. The study of Personal Magnetism, as set forth in the admirable books I have mentioned above, should be next to the study of the Holy Bible.

"Personal Magnetism embodies all the laws governing man's influence over man. It is the power that makes men mould the minds of men. It turns life's failures into successes. It develops the latent powers of the will and makes one capable of the accomplishment of great deeds. I have received many letters on the subject, and to all writers I have answered: 'Write to the New York Institute of Science, Rochester, N.Y., asking for their scientific work on Personal Magnetism and Hypnotism. It will be sent to you free of charge. If its perusal does as much for you as it did for me you will thank me the longest day you live for having called your attention to the book.'—Yours truly, (Rev.) PAUL WELLER."

It will only be necessary for you to send your request to the New York Institute of Science, Dept. V A 9, Rochester, N.Y., U.S.A., and you will receive the volume Rev. Paul Weller recommends by return mail. IT IS FREE. A penny postal card will bring it.

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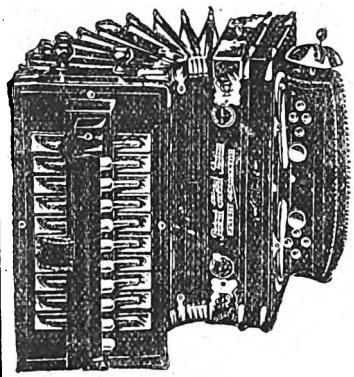

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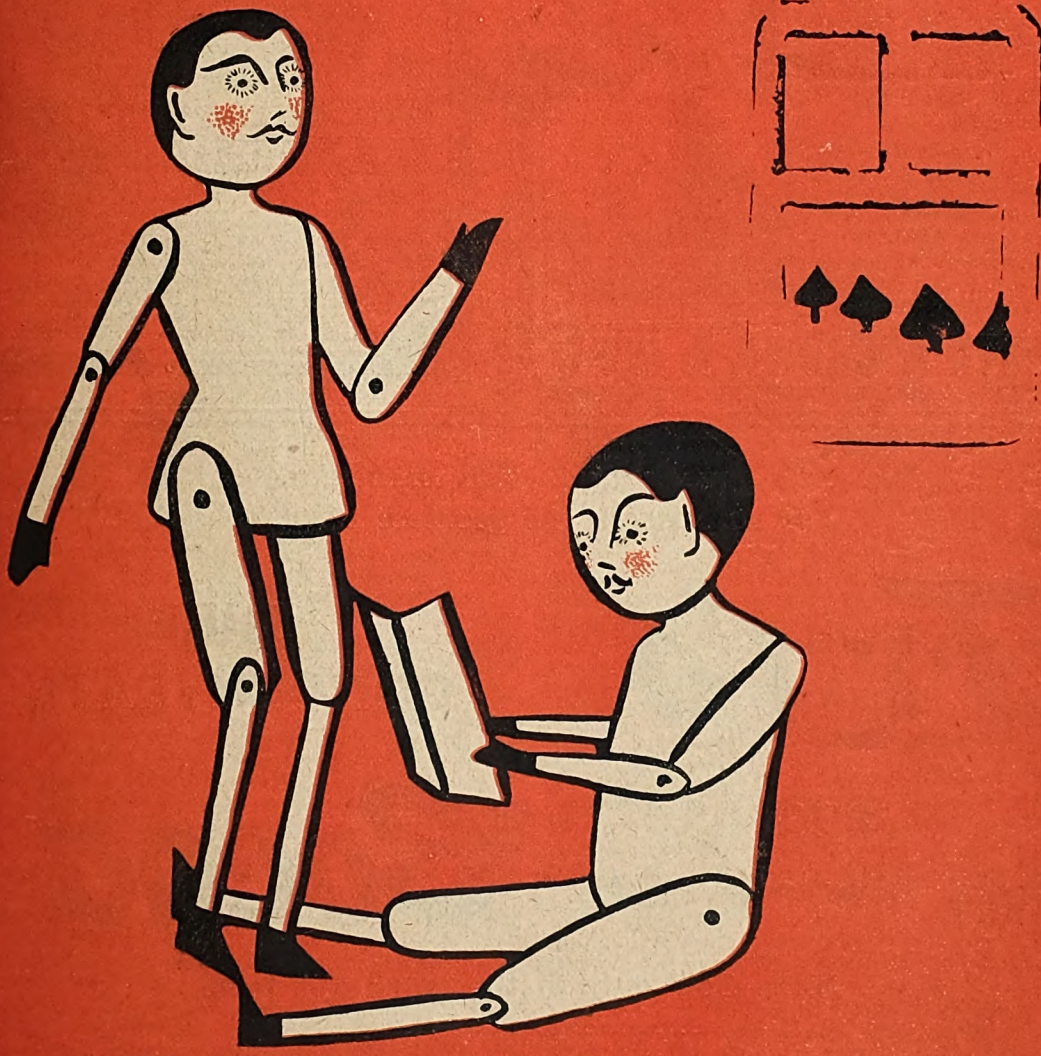

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SHORT STORIES

No. 683.] For the Week Ending February 1st, 1902. [One Penny.

Apat, the Faithful.

A True and Exciting Story of the Malay States.

My husband, whom I will call Mr. Rose, had the misfortune to be employed in a certain anomalous branch of the British Government service called the Malay Native States Service.

We did not think it a misfortune when he first obtained an entry into the service—on the contrary, we were very much pleased; but that was only from ignorance of what awaited us.

The first station to which we were sent was bad enough; the second, of which I am going to speak, was worse. It was at Durian Sabatang, a wretched Chinese village, built on a flat mud swamp, about forty miles up the Perak river.

Our first sight of Durian Sabatang filled us with dismay. The Residency, or Government Bungalow, in which we were expected to live, was an ancient shed made of palm leaves, propped up on about fifty tottering legs made of the stems of palms. The shed was in so dilapidated a condition that no respectable English farmer would have put a respectable English cow into it. There was a ladder at the back and another at the front, by which the shed could be entered.

The so-called "garden" attached to this charming abode consisted of a flat strip of flower-border on each side of a straight, flat strip of road, about fifty yards in length, which led up to the house. These borders were planted with what were meant to be flowering shrubs, which, not being protected by any fence, were nibbled to mere stumps by stray goats. There was, however, a bit of swampy turf at the back of the residential shed, on which we eventually managed to play lawn-tennis under difficulties.

On entering the shed we were at once struck by the numerous gaps in the thatch. A storm of rain generally occurs once in twenty-four hours in the Straits Settlements, consequently it was not long before we had an opportunity of experiencing all the discomforts attendant on a leaky roof. There appeared to be about twelve permanent leaks; but, besides these, every now and then the wind would lift up a large piece of thatch bodily, while the rain poured as if from buckets through the temporary openings thus made. There were no ceilings to the rooms, the bedrooms were only formed by palm-leaf fences about eight feet high, something like the wattles used in Kent for inclosing sheep. The skeleton framework of poles, on which the thatch rested, was not veiled or disguised in any way.

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High up on these poles where they converged, among cobwebs so black and solid from age that they looked like pieces of cloth waving in the wind, sat rats of all sizes, eating, playing, and enjoying themselves thoroughly. I think they were the only creatures that did enjoy themselves thoroughly at Durian Sabatang. The cat gazed fiercely at them with glittering eyes from below; but not being gifted, like a sloth, with the power of hanging by her claws from the under side of a pole, she could not reach them. At first we used to amuse ourselves by throwing all sorts of missiles at the rats; but we never hit them, and only further damaged the frail roof, so we had to give that up.

The use of the shed's fifty legs soon became apparent. The first morning after our arrival, on looking out of the window-hole (windows there are none, of course, in so hot a climate), I saw the whole country was under water, and one of my poor hens, which I had brought with me from a former station, was floating past the house on the flood with all her new-born chickens. This flood was the result of a high tide from the sea, from which Durian Sabatang is not very distant as the crow flies. We had many such floods during my stay in this delectable swamp. The Kling gardener delighted in them, as they gave him an unfailing excuse for doing nothing. When asked why there were neither flowers nor vegetables in the garden, he always laid the blame on the floods.

It was, however, vexatious not to be able to grow vegetables at home, as none fit to eat were to be had in the squalid Chinese shops. As for fresh beef or mutton that was, of course, quite hopeless. Such a thing as a cow or a sheep had never been seen in Durian Sabatang. We lived, therefore, almost entirely on tinned meats, which were always much damaged by the climate before they reached us. We got so sick of them at last that often we let them go away from the table untouched, and preferred to starve. These tins had, most probably, been for many months in the Singapore shops, and a month in the tropics is more damaging than a year at home. A Singapore shopkeeper, unless he is greatly belied, looks on an order from a "junglewallah" as a Heaven-sent opportunity of getting rid of his unsaleable goods. He knows that the freight to the jungle is so heavy that the wretched victim will think twice before sending anything back.

Whene'er we took our walk abroad—for there was

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only one road in Durian Sabatang, and that only half-a-mile in length—we saw many hideous, nine-tenths-naked Chinese coolies, almost all with repulsive skin-diseases, and all without exception owning the most villainous countenances; they scowled at us with dulled looks, being opium-eaters to a man.

A large proportion of the Chinese population was generally in prison for some crime or other, and gangs of them might be seen walking about with chains on their legs, each gang under the charge of a small Malay policeman with a loaded gun. These convicts were generally considered by the British and Malays to be the flower of the Chinese community, the argument being that all Chinese are scoundrels deserving of prison, and that those who elude prison are merely more practised scoundrels than the rest.

Thus the convicts were much run after as washermen, and on one occasion, the superintendent of the police, being obliged to leave suddenly, put his house and all its contents under the charge of his pet convict, as being one of the few comparatively honest men in the place. The consequence was that this convict might be seen any day in the superintendent's verandah, lounging comfortably in a long chair, with his legs, iron chains and all, stuck up on the table, and a cigarette in his mouth. I believe, however, that the superintendent had no reason to regret his choice of a caretaker.

For society we had a fluctuating company of three at the most, all British. There was, I need scarcely say, no doctor among them. If any of the three fell ill and wished for medical advice, he had to send a boat up the river to ask leave of the Resident to go to Penang. The boat took about five days to go up the river, as it was against the stream, and about three to come back; so, even in case of the Resident's happening to be at home, and replying at once, there must still be eight days' delay at the very least before the invalid could get permission to go to Penang, and after that, possibly a whole fortnight might intervene before the steamer could arrive to take him. The diseases most common to Britishers in the tropics are fever, cholera, and sunstroke, any one of which may carry off a strong man in a few hours; but in this Government service it was looked upon as a crime for any officer, even though feeling himself at the point of death, to leave his post without the proper official eight days of delay. The theory in high official circles was that "an officer worth anything would always rather die at his post than leave it without permission."

As there was no doctor within reach, so also was there no Christian church in Durian Sabatang. The nearest church was at Penang, which was practically as far off as if it had been at Timbuctoo.

A trading steamer used to come once a fortnight, except when she broke down or went into dock. One or other of these misfortunes happened pretty frequently, and oh, the straining of the eyes down the river on the days when the steamer was expected, and the heartsick disappointment when she did not come; or, on the other hand, the wild tumult of delight when her whistle, faint and far off, but still unmistakable, was heard! It was not surprising that we felt so much excitement about her coming, as the whole of our comfort for a month depended on that single uncertain thread; she had a horrid way of going into dock without giving us poor dwellers in jungles the slightest warning, and when that was the case, we were literally half-starved until she came out again.

It is quite impossible in the tropics to keep a large stock of eatables and drinkables, as everything goes bad with the most frightful rapidity. The resources of Durian Sabatang itself, in the way of food, consisted of skinny fowls that had gained their livelihood by acting as scavengers in the streets; of river-fish, with a strong muddy flavour; and occasionally, as a great treat, of a piece of fresh pork, "butchered to make a Chinese holiday."

Besides stores, the steamer brought us letters and newspapers, and was our only means of communication with the outside world. The rest of the fortnight, when we had devoured our newspapers, was weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable, our lives being a burden to us through heat, *ennui*, and mosquitoes, of which last, of course, there were millions.

After we had vegetated in this miserable place for some months, we were electrified one night by hearing the whistle of a steamer. Who *could* it be? Mr. Rose looked out, saw the fiery eye of a small steam-launch gleaming in the blackness of the river, and went to meet the new arrival. It proved to be a young Englishman, slightly known to us, who had a thrilling tale to tell. The Chinese coolies at Lumut, to the number of many hundreds, were in open mutiny, he said, against the British, and he himself had fled for his life by night. Lumut, it should be mentioned, was a sugar estate at some distance, the owner of which had lately become bankrupt. Mr. Rose felt at first inclined to pooh-pooh the danger, though he thought it quite probable the coolies were justly irritated at not having their wages paid.

He, however, started with the young Englishman next morning for Lumut, taking with him a few Sikh police under a legalised ruffian of the name of Subadar Deen Mahomed, much valued by the Government officials on account of his strength of "character," *i.e.*, his utter unscrupulousness as to the means which he employed for the attainment of their desires.

When Mr. Rose arrived at Lumut he found there was a good deal of truth in the young Englishman's report. The Chinese, though they could hardly as yet be called in open mutiny, were evidently ripe for it; in fact, in the very first words which Mr. Rose exchanged with their headman, the latter openly threatened his—the magistrate's—life, and that of all the Britishers in the State.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when the audacious Chinaman measured his length on the floor, Deen Mahomed having, with the speed of lightning, twisted his hand into the man's pigtail and laid him low without waiting for orders. Mr. Rose could hardly forbear a smile at the neat way in which it was done; but, after allowing the man to lie there for a minute or two as a lesson, he desired Deen Mahomed to let him get up, and then addressed the coolies through him as interpreter.

He told them he could not allow them to remain at Lumut, as, the estate being bankrupt, there was no longer work for them there; but that he would give all a free passage, with food, to Penang, and would report their case to the authorities in Penang, who, he had no doubt, would soon find them suitable employment and wages.

The men appeared satisfied with this programme, translated for them into Chinese by the headman, whose pigtail was still in the grasp of Deen Mahomed, and whose manners wonderfully softened and improved. Mr. Rose saw the coolies all off by the next steamer, paying another visit to Lumut for the purpose.

On his way back from Lumut, Mr. Rose called, in his magisterial capacity, on the superintendent of the neighbouring island of Pangkor. Happening to mention that I was very unwell—a not surprising result of the discomforts of Durian Sabatang—the superintendent and his wife kindly suggested that a visit of two or three days to them at the seaside might benefit me. I had never seen either of them, but that was of no consequence in a country where English are so rare that all are to a certain extent brothers. So, on receiving a note from Mrs. Lee, I accepted the invitation without scruple, and a few days more saw me on board a steam launch on my way to Pangkor. Mr. Rose was, of course, unable to accompany me, as he was tied to his office work in Durian Sabatang.

When I arrived at the Lee's, the first thing they told me was that all their men servants had absconded the day before, immediately after receiving their wages. I was not much surprised at this, as I had often heard of such things happening to other people. We ourselves had never had any experience of this kind, but we attributed this to our having brought two trustworthy servants with us from Sarawak, where the servants are, as a rule, far better than those to be had in the Malay peninsula. In fact, the latter are always said to be the refuse of China, and those who take situations in isolated jungles are the refuse of that refuse—men who have made the towns too hot to hold them, and are glad to be in hiding for a time. I felt very sorry for my hostess, who did not look strong, and had three small children, the youngest only six months old. She had been obliged to get in some Kling servants from the village at a moment's notice—one to act as house-boy, the other as under-nurse—but they appeared to be ignorant savages. There was also a Chinese ayah.

I had luckily brought with me an old Chinaman called Apat, as my attendant. He went by the nickname of the "Faithful," because a sort of canine fidelity appeared to be his strongest characteristic. As soon as he discovered the state of affairs, he both cooked the dinner and waited on us at table, also doing what he could to help in the housework.

Next day we went for a walk on the island, ending with a call on the Penghulu, or Malay headman of the district. Our reception was not particularly cordial, and on our way home I was told the cause of this. Mrs. Lee had been ill, and the Penghulu's womenkind had come to call on her and inquire after her health. They thought it due to themselves, Malay fashion, to come in a troop of thirty, tailing off into a rabble of dirty unclad little slave boys and girls; they forced their way into her bedroom, where she was lying down with a bad headache, and intrusive and obtuse like all Malay women, began to ask foolish and impertinent questions, to touch Mrs. Lee's face and dress with their dirty hands, and to beg for everything they saw, which, in their code of manners, is considered a delicate compliment to the owner.

They did not mean any harm; on the contrary, they doubtless thought they were showing themselves extremely kind and neighbourly; but the not unnatural result of their attentions was that on Captain Lee's coming in, Mrs. Lee begged him to send them away, and he cleared the room without ceremony. The women went home and complained to the Penghulu that the superintendent had been uncivil, no doubt greatly exaggerating his actions; and since that day the Penghulu and he had been barely on speaking terms.

On the following day (Thursday) we paid a visit to the deserted sugar estate of Lumut, which was on the mainland close by. Here we visited the hut of the Eurasian superintendent, who was remaining there almost alone until all the affairs of the estate should be wound up. He evidently wished to make himself extremely agreeable, and busied himself in preparing tea for us. As we steamed back in the launch to Pangkor I asked Captain Lee how it was that this man, who was doubtless looked on as a white man by the Chinese coolies, had been able to stay on in no danger from them, although the two other white men on the estate had both fled. He replied that this man was believed to belong to the same Chinese Hoey, or secret society, as the coolies.

In Mrs. Lee's room were two Chinamen smashing open a box with hatchets.

The evening passed without anything eventful occurring, and as the mosquitoes were maddening, we separated for the night soon after nine.

I had been asleep some two hours, perhaps, when I was suddenly awakened by a great shouting and a great light overhead. The house was, like ours at Durian Sabatang, subdivided by partitions only about eight feet in height, so that a light in any one room lit up the whole roof, which was visible from all parts of the house. Besides the shouting and the glare, I heard several shots fired. "A Chinese festival, no doubt," thought I; and I felt no alarm, but only surprise that Captain Lee should allow Chinese to come into his house

making such a disturbance at midnight. After the noise had gone on for a few seconds, I began to think it strange that I did not hear Captain Lee's voice, and then to think that the sounds were almost too loud and confused even for a Chinese feast. I did not feel inclined to go out of my room, as my dress was hardly the thing for a mixed company, but compromised matters by jumping on a small table that stood near, and peeping over the wall. Then I saw a sight that convinced me that all was not right.

In the doorway just opposite me, which I knew was that of Mrs. Lee's room, were two Chinamen smashing open a box with hatchets. Yet I was far from guessing what was the fact—namely, that my host had been murdered a few minutes before, and that he and his wife were now lying weltering in their blood, just inside that doorway! I cried out loudly, "Captain Lee! Mrs. Lee! What is all this? What is the matter?"

There was no answer; but one of the Chinamen looked up, saw me, and, with his hatchet still in his hand, made for the door of my bedroom. I dashed down and held the door in the insane hope of keeping him out; but, alas! it was only made, like the rest of the house, of palm leaves lashed together with rattan, and in another moment the Chinaman had forced it open, and stood before me. Even then I did not understand that he intended to murder me. I was ignorant of the tragedy that had just taken place, and it never occurred to me as possible that the Lee's were not alive and well somewhere about the house.

The Chinaman marched into the middle of the room, I retreating before him, and saying in Malay, "What are you doing here? What do you want? Get out!" He made no answer, but held the hatchet up in front of him, grasping the handle with both hands, and, without the smallest change of expression in his countenance, made cuts, as I then thought, ineffectually, at my head. I raised my hand to parry the blows, and, as I felt absolutely no pain, fancied I had succeeded, but I must have fallen down insensible, as I remember nothing more. The doctor, on afterwards examining my head, found three trifling cuts and one severe one upon it, the latter about four inches long, and tolerably deep.

I do not know how long I lay unconscious, but my next recollection is of being roused by the sound of many excited Malay voices in the room. On first coming to myself I was by no means clear in my head or memory, and tried in vain to recollect where I was and what had happened.

I found myself lying under a bed, among boxes and lumber that were all strange to me. I listened eagerly to the noise going on in the room, but as about twenty Malays were all talking at once, even a better Malay scholar than myself might have been puzzled. I gathered, however, from a stray sentence, that Captain Lee was dead.

This filled me with great horror, which increased when I heard them talking about a Chinaman that was dead, and then I listened in vain for the voices of Mrs. Lee or the children. The silence of the latter seemed indeed ominous, as during my short acquaintance with them I had never before known them all to be quiet simultaneously. The poor little things had kept up a constant wailing night and day, from not being accustomed to their new nurse; so that now, when there was so much additional cause for their crying, their silence seemed most unnatural. I would have given a great deal at that moment to have heard again the pitiful wailing that had kept me awake on the first night of my arrival.

Presently I heard one of the Malays inquiring after me, and another replied in a cheerful voice:

"Doubtless she is dead, and her body thrown into the sea."

This did not seem to convince the questioner, who called out:

"Mem Perak! Mem Perak! Where are you? Do not fear; we are your friends. Come out!"

I felt so sure by this time that I was the only survivor from a general massacre of the British and their followers—for I had made up my mind that the dead Chinaman of whom they spoke was Apat, my servant—that I resisted without difficulty this polite invitation to come and be murdered, as I considered it. In fact, the more the Malays called me, the less inclined I felt to come; and when one of them presently lifted up the draperies of the bed and peered under it, I held my breath and lay as still as possible. He did not see me, as there was very little light, and the boxes concealed me.

The Malays continued to chatter, and I to listen. I heard one of them giving orders, and others deferentially replying, "Yes, sir, certainly, Tuan Penghulu." I immediately jumped to the conclusion, from what I had known of the quarrel between Captain Lee and the Penghulu, that the latter had planned the murder.

Shortly afterwards I heard the Penghulu dictating a letter, apparently to Mr. Rose, urging him to come at once and to bring plenty of police. This produced quite a revolution in my opinions; it was quite incompatible with my theory that the Penghulu was a murderous rebel, as the police in question were Sikhs and Pathans under the notorious Deen Mahomed; in short, they were formidable fellows, and the very last men whom a rebellious Malay would wish to meet.

My doubts of the Penghulu were dispelled by my hearing the well-known tones of my servant Apat, who came in saying he had hunted everywhere for and could not find me. This determined me to come out and show myself, and I did so. I must confess that the moment of my emerging from my retreat was an exciting one, for I could not really tell for certain whether I had heard aright—whether, in fact, I should be welcomed or murdered.

But I was not long left in doubt. After a general exclamation of "Wah!" from everybody they rushed up to me, Apat foremost. In delight at seeing me again, he seized both my hands, grinning from ear to ear, and expressing his joy at my being alive. I then had to tell the assembled company all that I knew of my own adventures, and they, in return, took up the tale where I left off.

They told me that, in the middle of the night, they had heard shots at the Residency, and had looked out and seen a great blaze of light in the direction of the house. They immediately armed themselves, and came out to find what was going on, arriving in time to see a quantity of boats full of Chinamen putting off from the shore. As they had no means at hand of pursuing them, they went into the house, where they found Captain Lee dead, Mrs. Lee apparently dying, the furniture all wrecked, and the bedclothes and other draperies just bursting into flames, the Chinese having set light to them with torches, no doubt in hopes of obliterating all traces of their crime. The Malays extinguished the flames, and did what they could for the dying.

The Penghulu was on the point of sending a report of the affair to Mr. Rose, mentioning, among other items, that from what I had heard whilst in hiding I saw no reason to doubt it. The Penghulu then showed me Captain Lee's

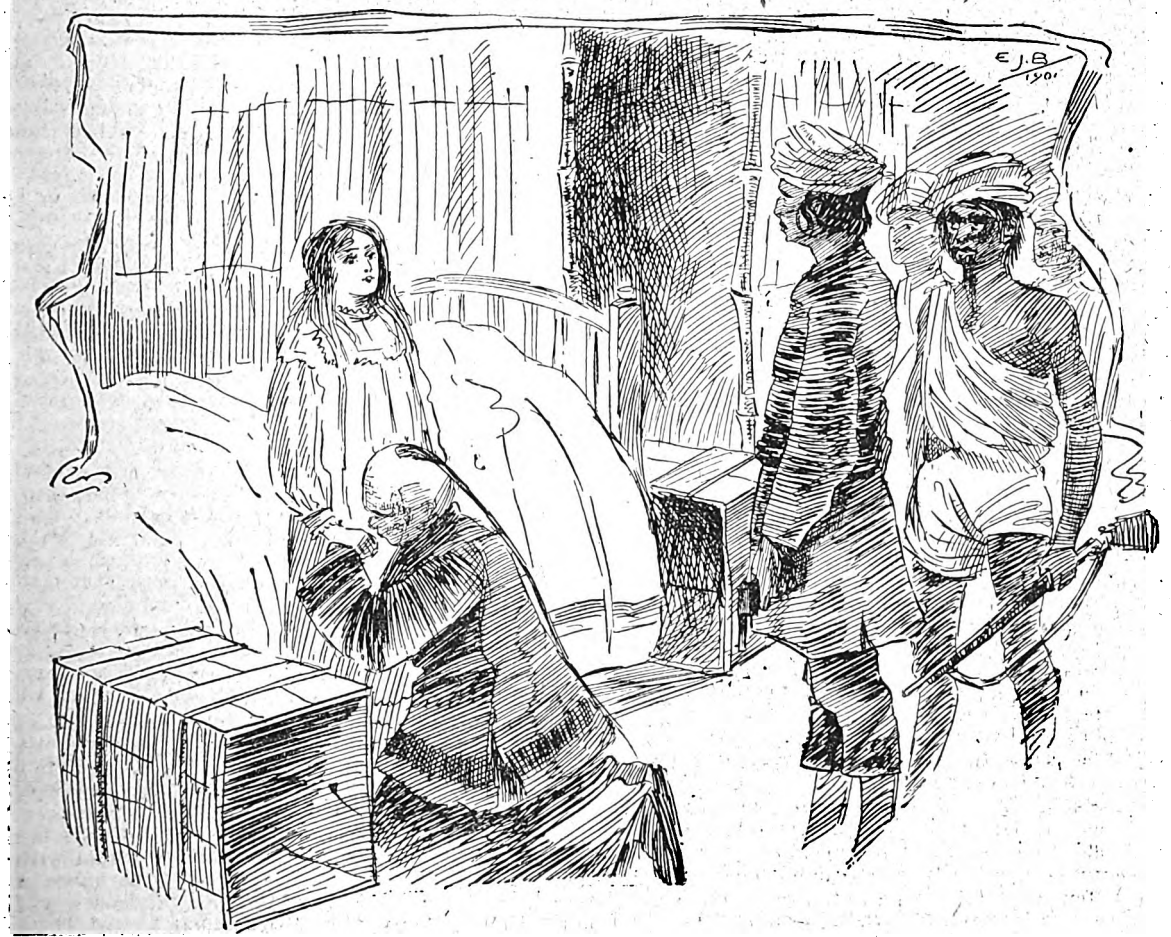
body, which was on the floor, reverently covered with a sheet, and the seemingly lifeless form of Mrs. Lee on the very bed from under which I had just come out. Her eyes were closed, and her face deathly pale, except where it was covered with blood, or black from the bruises of the hammers with which the fiendish ruffians had not scrupled to strike her.

I asked the Penghulu whether he thought she was alive. He said "Yes," but he did not think she could possibly recover. I suggested that "while there was life there was hope," and that we ought to do all we could to get her British medical assistance; and, after discussing what was possible to be done, it was proposed that I should go in the steam-launch, which was just about to set off for Durian Sabatang, and fetch with all speed the trading steamer, now probably somewhere on the Perak river.

I felt some doubt as to whether I had not better remain with Mrs. Lee, in case of her becoming conscious; but the Penghulu assured me that, from his experience of such cases, she would certainly not recover consciousness for hours, perhaps not for days; and that I might safely leave her in the charge of her Chinese ayah and of his own wife (who sat beside the bed fanning her), and be back again with the steamer before she could awake. Accordingly this was settled, and as the steam-launch was not yet quite ready, the Penghulu sat down to finish his letter, while I went to make some alterations in my dress. First, however, I inquired after the children, and, to my amazement, was told they were alive and unharmed. I walked into the nursery to see them for myself, and there they were, all placidly asleep in their little cribs. How they had contrived to sleep through all the disturbances was wonderful, unless, as was afterwards suggested, they had been drugged by the Chinese ayah.

The Malays now brought me a looking-glass to show me what my own appearance was like, and truly I was a ghastly object. My face, my hair, and my clothes were covered with not merely stains, but masses of clotted blood. I could not attempt to alter this, as I did not wish to keep the steam-launch waiting; so I merely added a hat and a long cloak to the clothes that I already wore, and started.

Once on board I had plenty of time, and tried to wash the blood from my face; but the skin was bruised and painful to the touch, and I desisted, under the impression that my face was cloven in half by a sword-cut—a mis-



I then had to tell the assembled company of my own adventures.

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taken impression, as it turned out, for I had no wounds except those on the top of my head.

The steam-launch was much longer in meeting the steamer than I had expected; but at last the welcome sight of her masts appeared, and I stopped her and told my story. I then sent on the steam-launch to Durian Sabatang, with Apat bearing a verbal message to Mr. Rose that he was not to be alarmed, as I felt quite well. This message Apat never delivered, but appeared before Mr. Rose with tears streaming down his face, and in such a state of fright at having to deliver bad news, that Mr. Rose could get hardly any news out of him at all. The Penghulu's letter was not much better, being, like all Malay letters, full of complimentary nothings, with the one piece of information crammed into half-a-line and placed in the middle of the letter, where it was as difficult to find as a needle in a haystack.

On our return to Pangkor, a coffin was hastily made for the body of Captain Lee, and it was carried on board to be taken to Penang. Mrs. Lee, still unconscious, and the children were also carried on board. I wished to remain behind to meet my husband, but was told that for several reasons it was advisable that I should also come to Penang; first, my testimony would be wanted at the inquest; secondly, my own wounds required medical attention; and thirdly, I might be of use in attending Mrs. Lee, as there was no European woman on board. To these representations I yielded, and, leaving a note to be delivered to Mr. Rose, I went on board.

We arrived at Penang at daybreak on Sunday. Our arrival caused, as may be supposed, a considerable sensation. Crowds of natives swarmed on to the wharf. The British authorities of Penang were soon in attendance, and an inquest was held on board; after which a discussion took place as to what was to be done with the survivors. The then Lieutenant-Governor of Penang and his wife, with their usual hospitality and warm-heartedness, wished to take in the whole party—children, ayahs, and all; but this was overruled by the doctor, who decided that Mrs. Lee was too ill to be moved to the Lieutenant-Governor's house.

In the end, Mrs. Lee and the children were taken in by a friend close at hand; while I went to the Lieutenant-Governor's house, where everything was done for me that could possibly be done in the way of kindness and attention. Before I left the steamer the doctor insisted on my having part of my head shaved. I have no doubt he was right; but the shaving, while the wounds were still fresh, hurt me terribly, whereas up to that moment I had felt no pain or discomfort from them.

I had barely arrived at the Lieutenant-Governor's house when Mr. Rose arrived from Durian Sabatang.

He had received the most garbled account of the affair—first from Apat, and then from the Penghulu at Pangkor, where he stopped for a few minutes on the way. He had had a most dangerous voyage himself, having come in a little steam-launch which was only fit for river use, and having encountered an awful storm at sea. As soon as he had satisfied himself that I was neither dead nor dying he went to interview the Lieutenant-Governor, who warned him that he would get into dire disgrace with his chief for having left his post without permission, as the excuse of a half-murdered wife was not admissible in official circles; and directed him to return at once to the scene of the murder, whither police, men-of-war, and all manner of defences were now being sent in hot haste, to "lock the stable door," and if possible to capture the murderers.

Investigations were meanwhile made in Penang, which resulted in the discovery that the murder had been done by a gang of Chinamen, composed partly of the ex-coolies of Lumut and partly of professional gang-robbers, who had hired a junk, and had been seen to start in the direction of Pangkor some days previously. It further came out that these coolies, indignant at being summarily disbanded from Lumut, and at not being at once provided with work by the Penang Government, had taken it into their foolish heads that Captain Lee was in some way to blame for their misfortunes, and that he was keeping back the money which ought to have been paid them in wages.

Just at that juncture arrived the three Chinese servants who had left Captain Lee's the day before my visit. They acted upon the discontented coolies like a spark upon gunpowder. The servants fancied they had themselves some grievance against Captain Lee, particularly the cook, who on one occasion had so far forgotten himself as to fling a plate at his master's head; and they easily persuaded the coolies that they would be doing what was only just and fair if they organised an expedition to recover their lawful wages, which, the servants declared, were kept by Captain Lee, to the extent of a thousand pounds, in a safe in his bedroom.

As a matter of fact, the money so kept was not the wages of the Lumut coolies; it was Government revenue, collected by Captain Lee, and kept in the safe until the proper day of forwarding it should arrive. However, the coolies swallowed the tale greedily, took some professional gang-robbers and the three servants with them, and carried out the expedition as we have seen. They found only two hundred in the safe, instead of the reported thousand; but they partly consoled themselves by carrying off all the watches, bracelets, and other valuables in the house. It was believed that at least sixty Chinamen had taken part in the affair.

After three weeks, when the country was again quiet, and Britons in Penang had ceased to look shudderingly under their beds at night for Chinese robbers, I returned to Durian Sabatang. I was twice summoned from there to go to Penang as a witness, and obeyed the first time; but as the hot voyage was very trying to my health, and my testimony was not in the least important, I ventured to disobey the second summons. In truth was so ill that my husband had determined to send me to Europe, and only waited to see if I should be wanted at the assizes before taking my passage.

I was not wanted at the assizes, of which I was glad on the whole, but, at the same time, I was not sorry to see and hear the end of an affair in which I took a deep interest. I never rightly heard all the details of the trial, but I believe that only three Chinamen were convicted, of whom one was hanged, and two were sentenced to penal servitude for life. Immediately after the sentences were pronounced, the man condemned to be hanged exclaimed, pointing to some of the prisoners who had just been let off, "Seven of those men whom you have let go are guilty!" No notice was, however, taken of this remark.

The one who was hanged declared from the first that he had committed all the murders, or would-be murders. He drew a plan of the house (a most curious specimen of drawing), to illustrate his confession, with little figures to represent the bodies lying in the different rooms as he had left them. Mine was lying in the middle of the room, just where I recollected the man striking at me; but how I came to be eventually in the other room hidden under the bed this man professed himself unable

to say. Several theories were suggested to account for this curious fact, the most probable one being that after remaining absolutely unconscious for some time, I may have partly recovered, and have had sufficient instinct of self-preservation to wander away and hide myself.

It was elicited at the trial that the sixty brave Chinamen who set forth to murder one Englishman and some women and children did not dare to do so without first making sure that the Englishman had no revolver.

They had arranged to have it stolen from Mrs. Lee's bedroom on the afternoon before the murder. This service was probably rendered them by the Chinese ayah, who alone had access to the room, and who was proved to have been a great friend of the cook's, the leader of the expedition. That cook was, unfortunately, never caught. The revolver was found next day hidden in the jungle.

Mrs. Lee gave evidence that her husband, on hearing a noise, had gone to the front-door unarmed, and had almost immediately staggered back into the room, wounded, and gasping out, "Give me my revolver!" She flew to get it, and found the case, but it was empty! Then she recollected turning and seeing her husband surrounded by Chinamen; but after this she remembered no more, being, like myself, struck down and left for dead.

The Chinese ayah, who was believed to have stolen the revolver, and made everything ready for the murderers, got off scot free. So did the twelve Malay police, who were supposed to guard the Residency, but who fled like rabbits at the approach of danger. So did about fifty-seven of the murderers, if the estimate of their number at sixty, made independently by several witnesses, be correct. So did the Eurasian superintendent, who was believed to have been an accessory before the fact; but this could not be proved against him.

Poor Apat died soon after the assizes under very suspicious circumstances. Mr. Rose had asked some officers of a man-of-war to lunch at Durian Sabatang, and he was much annoyed at the remarkably bad luncheon that was set before himself and his guests. At last he spoke about it to the servant in waiting, saying "Tell Apat this is really too bad." The servant replied, "Apat, sir, is dead." "*Dead!*" exclaimed Mr. Rose, aghast; and the guests, overhearing, inquired, with horror, "What, is the man who cooked the food we have been eating *dead?*" The servant repeated his statement, whereat they all rose and went into the kitchen, but found that Apat's body had already been carried away by his friends. They followed, and a sort of post-mortem examination was held, when the conclusion was come to that the death might have occurred from his having himself taken too much opium, or, on the other hand, it might have resulted from some other poison.

A suspicious circumstance was that a Chinese scullery-man, lately hired by Mr. Rose, was missing, and never reappeared, and that Apat's wages, which had been paid him that morning, were also missing. It was suggested that the scullery-man was an emissary of the Penang Hoey, sent to murder Apat on account of the evidence he had given at the trial: but this seems improbable, as Apat had given no evidence that could convict anyone. He had been in his usual health up to the day of his death.

With the sad and mysterious death of Apat "the Faithful" ended the series of horrors which, I fear, I shall never be able to forget.

Trevor Bates.

ONE ❋ ❋ ❋

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PART I. READY FRIDAY, JAN. 31.

CONTAINING THE FOLLOWING PICTURES:

"GIRL WITH AN APPLE" . . . . By Greuze.
"SPEAK! SPEAK!!" . . . By Sir J. E. Millais.
"THE MADONNA AND CHILD WITH ST. JOHN" . . . . . By Titian.
"THE HARBOUR OF REFUGE" . . . . . By Frederick Walker, A.R.A.
"THE DOG IN THE MANGER" . By Walter Hunt.
"THE VALLEY OF THE LLUGWY" By B. W. Leader, R.A.
"KING COPHETUA AND THE BEGGAR MAID" . . . . . By Sir Edward Burne-Jones.
"CROMWELL AT DUNBAR" . . . By A. C. Gow, R.A.
"SPRINGTIME" . . . . By P. H. Calderon, R.A.

Part II. Published February 14th, will contain Pictures by Lady Butler, Murillo, Orchardson, Hobbema, Landseer, Turner, etc., etc.

Further particulars of the subsequent parts will be announced later.

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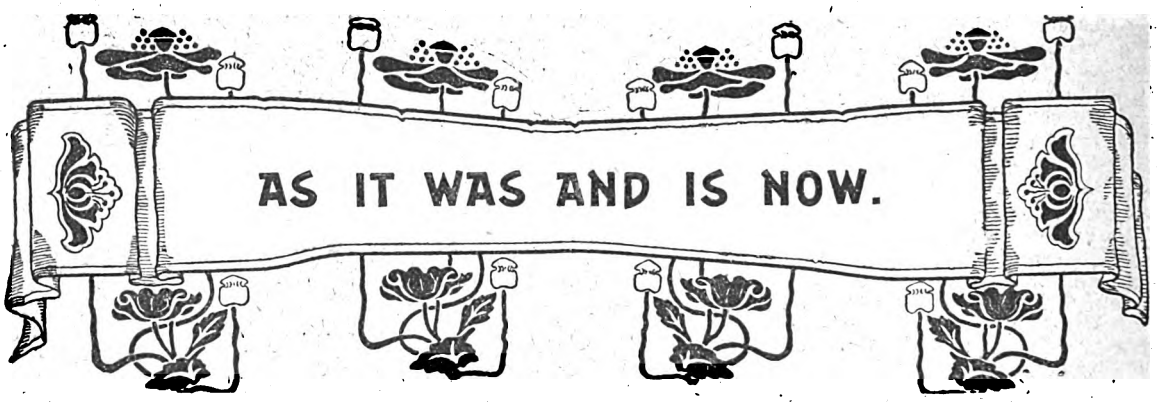

THE door of Madame Mardi's little shop stood open. In passing one caught a delicious whiff of perfume—an exquisite subtle fragrance that hung in the soft, moist atmosphere. The afternoon had been wet. But although the rain had ceased, the trees and roofs of the houses were still dripping in a dismal melancholy fashion.

The exterior of the shop, facing the narrow street, which seemed to wind its way uphill almost perpendicularly, was gloomy and forbidding. The small window, from which one Venetian blind had been thrown back against the wall, wore a thick coating of dust. More than one pane was cracked or broken, and here and there a bundle of yellow rags had been thrust into the aperture to keep out the draught. And all the time the bountiful largess of scent came out from the half-closed entrance.

Two pedestrians were coming down the steep incline. Both were dressed in black.

"I have no right now to talk of marriage," the man was saying, "I have no right even to speak of love——" He broke off abruptly, and turned away. There was a ring of despair in his voice. He felt dejected and disheartened, and had not the good sense to keep it to himself.

In spite of herself the girl blushed. A dull pain began tugging at her heart and showed itself in the lines of her face. She caught her underlip savagely between her teeth. For a moment the humiliation of her own self-consciousness maddened her.

"No?" she said stupidly. It was meant as an interrogative—a polite effort to be interested in a friend's affairs. But the girl had never learnt to disguise her feelings, and it sounded a pitiful acquiescence to the inevitable.

"For a long time I have been hoping against hope," the man went on. "I deceived myself. I forced myself to believe that something would turn up—that it would all come right in the end."

They were opposite Madame Mardi's shop now, and both stopped instinctively. For years they had walked home from the factory together, and the parting, when it came, was always reluctant.

A light drizzle was beginning to fall, and the man opened his umbrella. It was an invitation to her to stop out a few minutes longer, and she accepted it.

"Why should you be so despondent?" she said presently. Her voice was low and tremulous, and the bright colour still burnt in her cheeks. She felt like a supplicant, and hated herself for the sensation. But it was her duty to comfort him. "They cannot go on reducing our wages," she continued, slipping her fingers through his arm, and looking up for the first time to his face. "We suffer when times are bad, but we benefit when times are better."

"Why should the working classes have the whole weight to bear?" the man retorted, his eyes flashing and his voice rising angrily. "How is it just or fair that we should be ground down to maintain an artificial scale of profits? We have a right to demand that the selling price of our produce is sufficiently high to yield something more than a mere pittance."

The girl shrugged her shoulders. It was an old point of discord between them.

"Intellect has the first right," she answered persuasively. "Might is always right—even the superiority of brain power over muscle. A living wage is all that the working classes can demand from the capitalist. Not always that. Supply and demand must regulate the labour market. No other system would be economically sound. Besides, we are engaged in the manufacture of a luxury. The price of flowers is sent up at one end by the cold; the price of every kind of scent falls at the other, because the public cannot afford to pay as much as it used when times were better. What are the perfumers to do? Why, reduce their expenses, of course. Retrench in the best way they can."

"In other words, by cutting down our wages. Let them be satisfied with less profits, that's what I say. You wait and watch them tighten the screw again, Miss Philosophy, on eight francs a week," and the man laughed mockingly, but with a touch of admiration that he could not conceal.

"I am not a philosopher," the girl answered quickly; "only I see both sides of the question. My mother is an employer. That makes a difference." She stopped, and pushed back the hair from her forehead. She wore no hat, and the wind that came rushing round the corner of the street had given her a wild and disorderly appearance.

"Why don't you set up for yourself?" she said suddenly.

The man laughed.

"Because I can't afford to, in the first place, and possibly I am wanting in intellect, you little pet saint."

"What you *want* is enterprise," the girl retorted, half-contemptuously. "When my mother opened her shop she knew less of the trade than you do, and all the

capital she had was saved from a smaller salary than yours."

They had reached the bottom of the hill by this time, and began slowly to retrace their steps. The man accepted her rebuke in silence. A change came over his face.

"Your mother is a specialist," he responded. "There is all the difference between a specialist and a competitor in an overcrowded field. You know yourself that any perfumer in Grasse would give £1,000 for the secret of Madame Mardi's bouquet. She has created a demand, and no one else can supply it. Everyone cannot be so fortunate."

The girl smiled. There was a great deal of truth in what the man said. Her mother's scent was different from anything else in the world.

"If only I knew the recipe," the man continued, with a suppressed eagerness that he could not altogether disguise.

"*If I.* Well, what would you do?"

Something in her tone made him turn and look at her closely. Almost unconsciously he moved a step nearer.

"I should set up for myself to-morrow," he answered, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm. "I would begin in a small way, and when I had earned enough I would build a factory for myself, and then——"

"And then?"

"I would share my fortune with the only woman there is in the world for me."

Once more the blood came surging to the girl's white cheeks, and she turned away, vividly conscious of the other's stare.

"What a happy dream," she exclaimed. "If only the castles we build in the air would sometimes come true——" And she broke off with a sigh.

"Marguerite, if you chose——"

"Hush!" she interposed, struggling to release her hand that he had taken in his. "Remember what you said just now. We must not let dreams affect our lives."

He let her go and watched her sullenly as she pushed back the door of the little shop.

"Good night, Ivan."

"Good night, Marguerite," he answered. For a moment they stood looking at one another. Her heart was beating faster than usual. He turned away, but came back again the next instant as if he had forgotten something.

"Marguerite," he said, "I don't believe you love me at all, not even a little scrap." And the next moment he was gone.

She stood on the threshold watching his broad back disappear down the hill; there was a choking sensation in her throat, and her pretty eyes were filled with tears.

* * * * * *

No one was in the shop. The little counter was covered with preserved fruits and crystallised violets, for which Madame Mardi was famous. Marguerite hung up her cloak behind the door, and mounted the three wooden steps which faced her.

"Is that you, Marguerite, child?"

"Yes, mother."

There was a little exclamation of pleasure in the same low, musical voice. A moment later the key was turned in the lock, and Madame Mardi's arms were entwined round her daughter's neck.

The room which served the old lady as her factory was small and square. A little wooden table ran down the middle. On this stood a number of empty bottles and half-a-dozen large tins of pomade already packed and labelled.

In front of the chair from which she had risen to admit her daughter stood a pile of glass frames, evenly spread with cold cream, in which the petals of a thousand violets were embedded. The floor at one end of the apartment was covered with flowers, which on closer inspection proved to be standing in great shallow basins of earthenware. A strong perfume pervaded the whole room. It was a strange, uncommon fragrance, that seemed half-bewildering and half-intoxicating to the senses. The girl crossed over to the window and opened it wide.

"How can you work in such an atmosphere?" she exclaimed.

Madame Mardi had already resumed her work.

"I love it," she said simply.

Marguerite drew the only unoccupied chair to the window, and, propping her elbows on the sill, and her chin on her hands, she sat there looking out over the red-tiled roofs of the houses across which the rain was now sweeping in great clouds of mist.

Her head ached, and her mind seemed to be in a feverish whirl. Ivan had never spoken to her of his love. There never appeared any necessity for an outspoken declaration. It was an understood thing, somehow, that they were all in all to each other. And now he had practically come to her and said that there could never be anything more between them than there had been in the past. She caught her breath with a hissing sound, pressing her hand to her heart.

"I don't believe that you love me, Marguerite," he had said. "Not even a little scrap."

She knew exactly what was in his mind when he uttered those words. Ought she to despise him for them? she wondered. What in the world could have put such an idea into his head? The girl glanced across the room at her mother. The old lady was bending over her flowers. The thin, tapering fingers were tearing them to pieces petal by petal with a dexterity that seemed almost incredible.

"She must have saved a great deal by this time," the girl reflected. "It is selfish to keep the secret to herself any longer when other people are in want. Selfish and mean."

She put her hand out into the rain, and pressed it to her burning forehead.

"After all," she went on, "the secret is as much mine as mother's. If I wish I have a right to share it with someone else. Ivan's happiness and my happiness both depend upon it. Besides, there is no reason why she should ever know——"

She started at her own thoughts and coloured guiltily.

"How demoralised I have become all of a sudden," she mused.

She got up and crossed over to Madame Mardi's side.

"Mother," she said, leaning on the table and looking up at the white, pinched face. "Mother, I believe you love your work better than me."

The accusation was too foolish to be taken seriously.

"My child, how can you talk such nonsense. My whole life is centred upon you. Dearest, you are crying——"

And Madame Mardi pushed back her chair and drew the tall, slim figure down on to her knees to kiss.

"What is it, little one?" she asked caressingly.

Marguerite tried to speak. But the words refused to come.

"You are tired, dear child," the old lady murmured,

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brushing back the unruly curls with long steady sweeps of her hand. "You must not stay out so late. Of course I love you. Who is it puts these thoughts into your head? I love you better than life itself. There! there! dearest, do not cry. I love you, and I enjoy working among my flowers, too. I am proud of the strength God has given me. It may be wrong, but I cannot help it. It makes me feel young once more when I think that, poor, lone widow that I am, I can hold my own and defy them all. We must thank our Blessed Mother for her goodness."

Her eyes sparkled, and she threw back her head defiantly. Madame Mardi's spirit was inexhaustible; but down in her heart Marguerite feared She had not the courage to say that she loved Ivan D'Auville.

* * * * *

Why Marguerite worked in the factory with the other girls nobody knew. But Madame Mardi wished her to learn the perfumer's trade in detail.

"Who can tell?" she used to say. "Perhaps some day we will open a factory of our own which you can superintend."

* * * * *

It was evening again. The scented corridors of the factory were crowded with men and women hurrying home after their long day's work. Ivan had been in the laboratory blending the various perfumes; he went down to the basement and found Marguerite there.

"I am going away from Grasse," he said abruptly.

She looked at him with startled eyes, bending her brows with an evident effort to understand.

"Going away?" she repeated numbly.

"Yes. The present wages are not enough to keep body and soul together. Mother is ill, and so is the baby. We cannot afford a doctor."

"But where are you going to? What is the good of going?"

"We may do better somewhere else. We can't do worse. Good-bye, Marguerite. Good-bye——"

"But can nothing be done?"

"Nothing. It might have been different. The dream might have come true if you——" He turned away overcome by the force of his emotions, and buried his face in his hands.

She said something, he did not hear what, and a moment later his ears caught the tap, tap of her wooden shoes across the stone-flagged floor. He started up at the thought that she was going.

"Marguerite," he called. "For Heaven's sake, have pity on me. One word from you can save us from this trouble."

* * * * *

A month swept by. A change had come over Madame Mardi. Her hair had grown whiter; her face was thinner and paler than of yore. When Marguerite came in she saw that her mother had been crying.

The sight went to her heart.

"Dear mother, what is the matter?"

"Do you not know, then?"

A cold wave seemed to sweep over the girl. She stretched out one hand and leant heavily on the little counter for support.

"Tell me," she murmured.

The old lady was furious. She spoke so fast that it was almost impossible to follow her.

"Someone else is making my scent. That's what I'm crying about. At least, I'm not crying." Here she produced her handkerchief and began blowing her nose in a way that contradicted the assertion. "Day by day my orders have been dropping down. This week they are not large enough to pay expenses. It's breaking my heart, that's what it is. But I'm not going to cry. What's the use of crying. Marie, be brave, I say. If I could find the man who is robbing me——"

Marguerite shuddered.

"Mother, mother. Do not take it to heart like that. Perhaps it will all turn out best in the end."

But the old lady was not to be consoled. She shook her head mournfully from side to side.

"Look here," she said.

Marguerite followed the direction of her mother's finger. It was pointing out of the window over the housetops to the scaffold of a new building that was being erected behind the church.

"You see that?" she asked quietly.

The girl was puzzled.

"Yes, mother," she said.

"Well, that's mine. Mine and yours. Every penny I have in the world is invested in it. I have been saving all my life for that factory, and now——"

Marguerite closed her eyes and turned away. She could not bear the sight of her mother's grief. What was this thing that she had done?

* * * * *

Ivan D'Auville was rich and prosperous. He looked round for the factory that he had dreamt of. A big edifice had been begun behind the church and abandoned. The landlord agreed to finish it off for him.

"I have not seen Marguerite for some time," he thought. "I must tell her that I am converted to her views on the labour problem. The more you grind your workmen down, the more satisfaction they give you."

The man and the girl met once more in the little street. He noticed how white and pale she looked as they came nearer. Possibly his conscience pricked him. "After all," he reflected, "I owe everything to her. It was a noble sacrifice."

For nearly an hour they walked up and down talking. Her heart was aching; her thoughts were full of her mother's disappointment; but she managed to listen to all he had to say.

"A few days more, little one," he observed, "and I shall have a comfortable home to offer to the woman I love. It is built on the wreck of some other person's hopes; but that is the way of the world."

The blood mounted to the girl's cheeks. After all, no great damage had been done. Her mother could live with them; the secret would still be in the family.

"When are you thinking of settling down?" she asked.

"That must depend," he answered, taking a rose from his buttonhole and picking it to pieces. "*Parbleu!* That must depend on my cousin Barine. She wants time for her trousseau."

He looked at Marguerite. Her face was so white and drawn that he wondered what he could ever have found attractive in her.

The sun shone down brightly.

Two little sparrows on the gable above nodded their heads and laughed. They seemed to have found a jest.

Ida Saindor.

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The Fate of MacCallum Faa.

It was a wild winter night in the Peninsula. The British army under Sir John Moore was in full retreat upon Corunna. Private MacCallum Faa muttered a deep curse upon the weather as he bent his feather-plumed bonnet to the driving snowstorm, and drew his tattered greatcoat closer across his breast. Private Neil Macrae echoed the curse as he tramped along through the snow shoulder to shoulder to Faa, in the rear of their regiment, the 42nd Highlanders.

Suddenly Faa spoke:

"D'ye hear aught, Neil?" he asked.

"Hear aught?" repeated Macrae. "Why, I hear the skirlin' o' the blast. What the deil else can a body hear a nicht like this?"

"Ye dinna hear the skirlin' o' the pipes, Neil?" asked Faa.

Macrae listened a moment and then replied:

"Na, I dinna hear them. They're na skirlin' noo, or we'd surely hear them wi' the win' blawin' straight doon tae us frae the pipers."

For some time longer the two Highlanders marched on through the fast falling snow, then MacCallum Faa again spoke.

"D'ye hear the pipes noo, Neil?"

Again Neil Macrae listened, and again he replied:

"Na, I hear naught but the sough o' the win'."

"Listen again, Neil. Hear ye na 'We Return no More'?" anxiously inquired MacCallum Faa.

Neil Macrae stopped dead in his tracks and seized Faa by the arm.

"Dae *ye* hear 'We Return no More'?" he demanded, peering closely into his comrade's face.

"Aye, I've heard it twice the last hoor, Neil; an' it's been runnin' in ma heid a' the day," replied Faa.

"D'ye hear it noo?" questioned Macrae, still grasping Faa's arm.

Faa listened a moment and answered:

"Aye, I hear it comin' doon on the win' frae the front."

Macrae listened intently for a long time, then he let go his hold of Faa's arm and said:

"Deil take me but I believe ye're fey. Ma lugs are as shairp as ony man's i' the regiment, an' I'll swear the pipes haena' played the last twa hoors. An' o' a' the tunes i' the piper's buik, what for should they play 'We Return no More'? Answer me that, MacCallum Faa?"

Faa shook his head despondingly, and said:

"I'm on ma last mairch, Neil. I'll ne'er see anither sun rise. But let's gang on. We're ower far tae the rear."

The two Highlanders resumed their march, and Faa continued:

"Neil Macrae, I'm on ma last mairch. I'll na live tae see anither morn. Na, dinna tell me I'm a fule. Yer ain Hielan' heart tells ye I'm fey. Noo, Niel Macrae, hear me speak. Ye've been a guid comrade tae me an' a true ane, an' I ken weel ye'll be true tae me an' mine after I'm deid. Neil Macrae, wad it surprise ye tae be tauld that MacCallum Faa is a mon o' walth?"

Neil Macrae turned and stared at Faa.

"I see," continued the latter, "it does surprise ye. An' yet, Neil, Private MacCallum Faa, wha naebody thocht was worth a plack, carries beneath his torn doublet the ransom o' a king. Neil Macrae, I hae wi' me noo, as I gang by your side, twa hundred thoosand punds!"

Macrae stopped short and gazed pityingly at Faa, whom he verily believed to be "fey," that is, forewarned of his approaching death.

Moreover, he now began to think that his comrade was wandering in his mind as well. His bosom comrade, Private MacCallum Faa, worth two hundred thousand pounds, which he carried on his person at that instant! Surely the foreboding thoughts of impending death had turned Faa's brain.

Faa read his companion's thoughts aright.

"Ye think I'm daft as weel as fey, Neil," he said. "But ye're wrong. Look here!" And fumbling under his greatcoat for an instant he brought forth a leather case. "In this bit pooch, Neil," said he, "are jools worth twa hundred thoosand punds. It's nae use, in this mirk nicht, openin' the case, but ye can tak' ma word for it that I'm na addin' a bawbee tae the value o' them."

"An' whaur the deil did ye get them?" gasped Macrae.

"I'll tell ye," answered Faa. "It was at the crossin' o' the Esla. Durin' the skirmish I found this bit case on the field, clasped in the dead hand o' a French trooper, wha had dootless looted it frae some Spanish mansion. I picked it up, and that same nicht I shawed it tae Henry Wilks, the lang leggit Lunnon dragoon. Wilks had got his deith blaw, an' I ca'd in by the hospital tae

see him. The loon was a bit fond o' me—I'd done him a guid turn at Vimiera when I was in the 91st—an' as I was biddin' him fareweel for the last time this side the grave, it cam ower me tae show him the jools, for I kent Wilks had been a jooler himsel' afore he 'listed."

"He was deein' fast, but he was well pluckit—thae Lunnon loons a'ways are when they come tae the wa'. Weel, he took the case an' lang he looked the jools ower an' ower. Then he said to me: 'Faa, ye blayguard, whaur the deil did ye snick this frae?' I tauld him quite angry that I was a Hielan' gentleman an' nae thief, an' that I'd found the bit case on the field an' took it as fair loot. I was a wee bit short wi' him for hintin' I had stole the jools an' I held oot ma haund for the case.

"'No sae fast, Faa,' says he, 'd'ye ken what these geegaws are worth?'

"'Na, I've nae idee,' says I. 'Hae ye?'

"'Hae I?' says Wilks, as prood o' his joolry knowledge as if he werena' within' an hoor o' his death. 'Hae I ony idee o' the value o' ony jools under the sun? I'll tell ye what, MacCallum Faa, ye're aboot the walthiest mon in the British Airmy the day. Ye're worth two hundred thoosand punds!"

"I thought Wilks was fulin' me an' I tauld him sae. 'MacCallum Faa,' says he, quite solemnly, 'ye ken, an' I ken it as weel, an' better, I'm near deith. In anither hoor,' says he, 'I'll be paradin' afore the Great Commander-in-Chief tae answer for ma manifold sins. Think ye then, I'm likely to add a fresh lee tae the lang list? What guid wad it do me, a deein' mon, tae pit a fause price on yer jools? For by the richts of war they belang tae ye. An', abune a' men in the warld, why should I fule ye, the mon that saved ma life at Vimiera? Na, na, Faa, auld comrade,' says Wilks, 'I'm na fulin ye. Tak' ma word for't, the word of a mon that kens the value to a penny piece of sic trinkets as are in this bit case; tak' ma word, these jools are worth fu' twa hundred thoosand punds. An' as they be yours by the richts o' loot in war, dinna ye pairt wi' them, Faa, for a penny less.' He gave me back the case an' I stayed by him till the last, an' it was I that closed the een o' Henry Wilks, the cavalrymon. An' I'm thinkin', Neil, it's yersel' that wull close the een o' MacCallum Faa afore morn."

"Na, na," retorted Macrae; "ye'll live tae tak' the jools hame tae Auld Scotlan' yet. But, ma certie, comrade, richt foot foremost, or we'll lose the regiment."

For during Faa's recital of his surprising story, he and Macrae had stood still in the fast falling snow. They hurried on after their regiment as fast as the deep snow would permit, and Faa continued:

"Gin aught happens tae me the nicht, Neil, ye'll find the case o' jools neist ma sark."

"Hoot, toot, mon!" retorted Macrae, endeavouring to cheer his despondent comrade; "ye'll live for many a lang day. Ye'll be a graund gentleman wi' the gowd the jools will bring ye."

Faa shook his head gloomily.

"I tell ye, Neil, I'll na see the morn. It's na use yer makin' bleeve ye think I will, I'm fey, Neil, an' the coronach is soundin' loud in ma lugs the noo. I'll be deid afore morn, an' that's why I tell't ye aboot the jools. An' noo, Neil, hear ma last will an' testament. Ye're a troo man, Neil, an' there's na need, forbye opportunity, tae pit it doon on paper. When the breith's oot o' me ye'll tak' the jools off me—I maun keep them whiles I'm alive—an' ye'll tak' them hame tae the auld countrie an' sell them for twa hundred thoosand punds. Ye'll gie hauf tae ma auld faither an' mither an' ma bonnie sister, Elsie, an' hauf ye'll keep yersel'; Neil—ye will I tell ye, it's ma deein' wish—tae raise yerself an' your kin in the warld. Sae let's hear nae mair, Neil. Ye'll dae as I hae wished ye. An' noo let's gang on."

Macrae was deeply affected by Faa's generosity and trust in him, but he obeyed his comrade's behest and tramped along in silence. It was a dark night, the now was driving in their faces and increasing in depth each moment. Suddenly, as they plodded along almost knee deep in snow, Faa stumbled over some obstruction hidden in the snow and fell heavily to the ground, with an audible snapping of bones and a deep groan. Macrae was quickly beside him and found that his comrade had fallen over a boulder and broken both legs. Macrae looked miserably about him into the wild winter night. The two Highlanders were alone. They had fallen far behind their comrades and it was useless shouting for help, for the wind was blowing fiercely down to them from the regiment.

"I maun gang after the lads, Faa," said Neil, "an' bring a pairty back for ye. There's naething else to be dune, an' the suner it's dune the better for ye, lad."

Faa groaned acquiescence. Macrae took his great-coat off, and regardless of Faa's feeble protests against the sacrifice, wrapped it round his unfortunate comrade. Then, having made him as comfortable as he could, he bade him cheer up and set out to overtake the regiment and return with help. A couple of hours later he returned with a squad of his comrades to the spot where he had left Faa, but the latter had vanished, leaving no trace in the thickly-falling snow. How he had gone and where, was a mystery. That was the last of Private MacCallum Faa of the 42nd Highlanders. He was posted in the regimental records as "missing" Only Neil Macrae knew of the jewels, and it was from him that I had this story. Neil is still alive, although it is now the year 1880. He is a prosperous Highland crofter, and was twenty-five years old when my great uncle, MacCallum Faa, so mysteriously disappeared that stormy winter night with two broken legs and two hundred thousand pounds' worth of jewels. Neil, at the age of ninty-six, is still hale, hearty, active and upright; and it is my greatest pleasure to hear him tell of the wild Peninsula days, and the strange disappearance of my lost relative, MacCallum Faa.

In the winter of 1880 I was travelling in northern Spain for orders for the firm by which I am employed. One afternoon I was walking from one small town in the province of Galicia to another a few miles distant. While still some miles from my destination in a wide stretch of open country, the snow, which had been threatening for days past, came down so fast and heavily that the air grew dark as night, and before an hour had passed I was completely out of my bearings.

Stumbling along in the blinding snowflakes, I came to the ruins of an old convent, and while looking about for some sheltered corner, I suddenly felt the ground give way beneath me, and, with a cry of alarm, I was precipitated into a black cavity. I had a box of matches, and striking one, discovered that I had fallen into a vault underneath the convent ruins.

The vault was empty save for a few dried faggots of wood, one of which I lighted and used as a torch. The hole through which I had fallen was fifteen feet above me, so I could not escape that way. In one wall of the vault was a yawning doorway, and approaching it, the torchlight revealed a long, dark, but perfectly dry passage. It was about three feet wide, and high enough for me to walk upright. I decided to enter.

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For nearly a mile I traversed its narrow length, and then it terminated in a very narrow, steep, and winding staircase which appeared to be built in the thickness of a stone wall.

I mounted the stairs and had ascended some twenty of them when I came upon a ghastly object. Sprawling over half-a-dozen of the steps was the skeleton of a man. A rusty stiletto was firmly fixed in the breastbone, and the bones of both legs were broken. By the position in which it lay the skeleton appeared to have been thrown down the stairs from above many years before, when its whitened bones were still covered with flesh. Whether the legs had been broken in the fall or before it, none could say. The stiletto, however, pointed clearly to murder. I stepped gingerly over the grinning object and continued up the stairs. But a few steps further upward I again stopped.

At my feet lay a dust-covered cloth. Holding the torch close to it, I discovered to my amazement that it was a kilt of 42nd tartan, very old and worn and faded. On the steps immediately above I saw several other articles, and picking them up, found a goatskin sporran, a tattered greatcoat, a private soldier's scarlet tunic, an old Highland feather bonnet, and a pathetically thin-worn pair of hose and shoes, all of the pattern worn by the famous old 42nd Highlanders in the early part of last century.

The clothes, like the skeleton, appeared to have lain undisturbed where I found them for very many years. What bygone tragedy did they now bring to light? It was natural to suppose that the clothes had belonged to the man whose bones lay on the steps below, and in that case he had been a private soldier of the 42nd Highlanders. But how came a British soldier's remains to be found in an underground chamber of some Spanish building? I was aware that I was in the exact country through which the British force under Sir John Moore had retreated to Corunna, and in that force was the 42nd Foot, for had not my lost great-uncle MacCallum Faa belonged to that historic regiment?

MacCallum Faa! I reeled back against the steep stairs as a wild suspicion flashed into my mind. Seizing the tunic, I examined the inside. An exclamation of mingled astonishment, pity, and horror burst from my lips, for there, stamped plainly in black figures on the inside of the tunic was the number of the regiment to which the unfortunate soldier-wearer had belonged, together with his regimental number. The first was, of course, the 42nd Foot, and the latter I recognised instantly as the number which Neil Macrae had often told me had been borne by my great uncle, MacCallum Faa! I leant against the steep steps and gazed pityingly and reflectively at the clothing and skeleton.

This then, was the fate of MacCallum Faa! Stabbed to death, murdered, even when his poor legs were broken; stripped naked and flung, body and clothes, down the secret staircase of some Spanish building!

"But why was he murdered?" I asked myself. "For the jewels he bore when he was last seen," came the natural answer.

Who had murdered him, and what building was this, in the underground chambers of which I had discovered his remains? Where did these steps lead to? My torch began to flicker warningly, for it was nearly burnt out, so I recalled my thoughts from the mysterious past to the stern present and continued up the stairs.

Full thirty more of them I ascended, and then I was confronted by a stone wall in which was a broad, low panel of wood. "A secret door," I muttered. But a door which had not been opened for very many years, I judged, by its appearance. Fumbling over it by good luck I found the spring, for the panel moved noiselessly aside. Stepping through the opening thus revealed I found my face brushed by heavy draperies, and pushing this cautiously and slightly aside, a strange sight burst upon me.

I was in a large room, luxuriously furnished as a bedroom, and brilliantly lighted up by tall wax tapers, the walls being covered by tapestry. In a huge wooden bedstead lay an old man, a very old man, much older in appearance than Neil Macrae, and by the bedside was a priest. The old man was evidently dying fast and was confessing to the priest. I was at first on the point of making my presence known, as I had no desire to hear what was only intended for the priest's ears, but seeing that the dying man had but a few more minutes of life, I thought it better not to disturb those last minutes by intruding in so unexpected a manner. I had thus, perforce, to listen to his confession.

"Murder, brother!" the priest was saying in a tone of mild surprise, as though it were no uncommon crime for one of his flock to confess to.

"Yes, father," groaned the old man. "It was many, many years ago, seventy-one long years ago, when I was a young man of thirty. It was the night when the British forces under Moore passed through here, in the winter of 1809. Returning to this house from the town that night in a severe snowstorm, I came upon a soldier of a Scotch regiment lying by the roadside, which, as you know, father, is a mile from my house. He told me he had fallen and broken both his legs, and that his comrade had gone for help. My heart was full of pity for the helpless soldier, bad as I was, and I carried him that long, weary mile to this house and got the servants to put him in my own bed—in this bed. Under my directions they stripped him in order that I might set his broken limbs, for, as you know, father, I am a skilled surgeon. I was about to set to the task of binding up his limbs when I observed a case clasped in the soldier's hands. He had fainted with the pain of moving him, so I took the case from his unresisting fingers and opened it.

"It contained jewels, father; jewels of priceless worth, and the sight of them roused all my worst passions to the utmost. I was heavily in debt, and those jewels would not only clear me but make me rich for life. At once I made up my mind. No one was in the room with me but the unconscious victim. I drew my stiletto and plunged it into his breast with such force that I could not withdraw the weapon. There is a secret panel in the wall of this room, father, which opens on to a staircase built in the wall. This staircase leads to an underground passage connecting this house with the old convent a mile away. No one knew of this underground passage then but me, and no one knows of it now but me—and you, father.

"I dragged the body to the secret panel, which I opened, and flung the dead soldier and his uniform down the secret stairs. Then I shut the panel and it has not been opened since. I burnt the bloodstained bedclothes and told the servants next morning that the soldier's comrades had come and taken him away during the night. No one suspected but that was the truth. I sold the jewels, which enabled me to pay my debts and live in luxury ever since.

"Moreover, father, I have prospered exceedingly, despite the dreadful deed which laid the foundation of all my wealth; and in that box on the table you will

find Bank of England notes to the value of £700,000, the value of the jewels which I stole from the man I murdered and interest on it at five per cent."

From my position behind the tapestry I saw the priest's eyes glisten, and he shot an eager glance towards the box on the table.

"Yes, brother," he said.

"Father," groaned the dying old murderer, "I wish you to seek out the relatives of the man I killed, and hand them over the £700,000. I remember well—only too well—his name and regiment, for he told me, when I was carrying him to this house, that his name was MacCallum Faa, that he was a private soldier of the 42nd Foot, and that his family hailed from the town of Inverness, in Scotland. Seek out the relatives of such a person who served under Moore in 1809, father, and give them the whole of the money in that box. In this way, father, I make what reparation I can for the dreadful crime committed by me so long ago. The remainder of my property, father, I leave to the Holy Church. And now, father, absolve me, for I shall not live many more minutes."

"Brother," said the priest softly, "have you, in your will, left that £700,000 to the surviving relatives of a long-dead and forgotten foreign heretic?"

"I have, father," feebly replied the repentant murderer.

"Then you must alter the will," said the priest determinedly. "You must leave *all* your property to the Holy Church."

"Mercy, father!" gasped the dying man. "I must——"

"Or I refuse you absolution!" thundered the priest his brow as black as night.

"Mercy!" shrieked the old man.

"*Excommunico*——" began the priest.

"I consent!" screamed the wretched old man.

The priest looked round the room for ink and paper.

I turned where I stood concealed by the tapestry and ran quickly, but noiselessly down the secret stairs. Hastily taking off my own clothes, I put on the faded kilt, tunic, bonnet, sporran, hose and shoes of my murdered relative, MacCallum Faa, and running up the stairs again, I peeped from behind the tapestry. The old man was just about to sign his name to the paper which the priest had drawn up, in which the former bequeathed all the property to the Catholic Church.

I parted the tapestry and stepped into the room. The priest had his back towards me, as he held the paper for the old man to sign. The latter raised his eyes for an instant in a last mute appeal to the remorseless face of the priest, and as he did so they fell upon me standing silently behind the father.

With one long, dreadful scream, that rings in my ears to this day, he dropped the pen, and pointing a long, shrunken forefinger at me, shrieked:

"The murdered Highlander!" and fell back dead, still, even in death, glaring and pointing.

At his cry and words the priest wheeled suddenly round, and as his horrified gaze fell upon the spirit of the murdered Highlander, as he thought, he fell upon his knees, his jaw dropped in speechless terror, he flung both hands out to ward me off, and with a great gasp, died, his body stiffening in that position.

I picked up the box on the table and made a hasty examination of its contents, which I found to consist of seven hundred £1,000 notes of the Bank of England. I thrust the box into a large, empty portmanteau which I found in a corner of the room. Then I returned to the secret stairs for my own clothes, put them on, and picking up the poor remains of MacCallum Faa, I carried them up to the bedroom and packed skeleton and uniform in the portmanteau with the cash box.

Taking up the portmanteau, I opened the bedroom door, and, after listening for a moment, closed it behind me, leaving the ghastly figures of the old man and the priest glaring and pointing horribly in the rigidity of death from fright.

By good luck I managed to make my way out of the house without seeing or being seen by any of the other inmates, whom I could hear talking and moving about. When I got outside I found the snow had ceased to fall and the stars were shining bright and clear. Without further mishap I made my way to the railway station of the nearest town, and travelled straight to Corunna, taking ship there for home, which I reached in due time.

The remains of my hapless great-uncle, which had lain for three score years and ten on the secret stairs of a Spanish mansion, I caused to be interred in his—and my—native village near Inverness.

Old Neil Macrae shed a stern, soldierly tear for his long-lost comrade of the wild days of Corunna, but he refused to take a penny of the £700,000, half of which I offered him. He says he is prosperous and content; but, nevertheless, I have made over £350,000 to his descendents "to raise them in the world," as the luckless but generous-hearted MacCallum Faa wished to be done.

W. J. ORMISTON.

Sister Was Careless.

LITTLE MISS: "I'm going to have a birthday party next week." Mr. Nicefellow: "The members of your family always celebrate their birthdays, I believe?" Little Miss: "Yes, all but sister. She's got so careless, she's beginnin' to skip hers."

The "No Medicine" Cure.

"YES," said the sober-faced man, "we tried everything for her. We had allcpaths and homeopaths, and water cures and movement cures, and they could do nothing for her. We finally gave up in despair, and——" "And she lingered along for a week or two, until death at last brought relief to her suffering," said the man who interrupts. "No, she got well immediately."

Result of the "Detective" Competition.

THE first prize of £5 has been awarded to Mr. Alec Malcolm, of Clifton Villa, Terenure, Dublin.

A prize of 10s. has been sent to each of the following:

J. Wilson, 84 Willesden Lane, Kilburn, N.W.; Miss M. Campbell, Withen's Lane, Liscard, Cheshire; T. S. Howe, 22 Claverton Street, Pimlico, S.W.; Miss H. Hall, 1 Quarry Terrace, Hastings; L. J. Lloyd, Portway Place, Wantage, Berks.; L. E. Miller, 105a Old Christchurch Road, Bournemouth; D. Jones, care of Mr. Jonah Jones, 31 Greenfield Terrace, Bargoed, near Cardiff; Miss F. Smith, "Winfrith," The Crescent, Bedford; A. E. T. Rampton, 29 Courthope Road, Hampstead; M. Freeman, 1 Henry Street, Chatham.

Fifty consolation prizes in the shape of books, knives, and pencil-cases have been awarded to other competitors. Below is the key:

(1) Four. (2) One. (3) Breakfast. (4) The one who sat in the seat facing armchair. (5) The one who occupied the chair facing the wall. (6) The one who sat in the chair on the left of armchair. (7) The one who sat in the seat facing armchair. (8) The one who occupied the armchair. (9) The ones who sat in the armchair and chair on its left. (10) The one who sat in the chair on the right of armchair.

THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XVI.
The Way of Woman.

For all that I realised that this love of mine for Yvonne was as a child still-born—a thing that had no existence save in the heart that had begotten it—I rejoiced meanly at the thought that she was not destined to become Andrea's wife. For since I understood that this woman, who to me was like no other of her sex, was not for so poor a thing as Gaston de Luynes—like the dog in the fable I wished that no other might possess her. Inevitable it seemed that sooner or later one must come who would woo and win her. But ere that befell, my Lord Cardinal would have meted out justice to me—the justice of the rope methought—and I should not be by to gnash my teeth in jealousy.

That evening, when the Chevalier de Canaples had gone to pay a visit to his vineyard, the thing that next to himself he loved most in the world, and whilst Geneviève and Andrea were vowing a deathless love to each other in the rose-garden—their favourite haunt when the Chevalier was absent—I seized the opportunity for making my farewells to Yvonne.

We were leaning together upon the balustrade of the terrace, and our gazes were turned towards the river and the wooded shores beyond, a landscape this that was as alive and beautiful now as it had been dead and grey when first I came to Canaples two months ago.

Scarce were my first words spoken when she turned towards me, and methought—but I was mad I told myself—that there was a catch in her voice as she exclaimed, "You are leaving us, Monsieur?"

"To-morrow morning I shall crave Monsieur your father's permission to quit Canaples."

"But why, Monsieur? Have we not made you happy here?"

"So happy, Mademoiselle," I answered with fervour, "that at times it passes my belief that I am indeed Gaston de Luynes. But go I must. My honour demands of me this sacrifice."

And in answer to the look of astonishment that filled her wondrous eyes, I told her what I had told Andrea touching my word of honour to Montrésor, and the necessity of its redemption. As Andrea had done, she also dubbed it madness; but her glance was nevertheless so full of admiration that methought to have earned it was worth the immolation of liberty, of life perchance, who could say?

"Before I go, Mademoiselle," I pursued, looking straight before me as I spoke, and dimly conscious that her glance was bent upon my face. "Before I go, I fain would thank you for all that you have done for me here. Your care has saved my life, Mademoiselle; your kindness, methinks, has saved my soul. For it seems to me that I am no longer the same man whom Michelot fished out of the Loire that night two months ago. I would thank you, Mademoiselle, for the happiness that has been mine during the past few days—a happiness such as for years has not fallen to my lot. To another and worthier man the task of thanking you might be an easy one; but to me, who know myself to be so far beneath you, the obligation is so overwhelming that I know of no words to fitly express it."

"Monsieur, Monsieur, I beseech you. Already you have said overmuch."

"Nay, Mademoiselle, not half enough."

"Have you forgotten, then, what you did for me? Our trivial service to you is but unseemly recompense. What other man would have come to my rescue as you came, with such odds against you, and forgetting the affronting words wherewith that very day I had met your warning? Tell me, Monsieur, who would have done that?"

"Why, any man who deemed himself a gentleman, and who possessed such knowledge as I had."

She laughed a laugh of unbelief.

"You are mistaken, sir," she answered. "The deed was worthy of one of those valiant knights we read of, and I have never known but one man capable of accomplishing it."

Those words and the tone wherein they were uttered set my brain on fire. I turned towards her; our glances met and in her eyes—those eyes that but a while ago had never looked on me without avowing the disdain wherein she had held me—were now filled with a light of kindliness, of sympathy, of tenderness, that seemed more than I could endure.

Already my hand was thrust into the bosom of my doublet, and my fingers were about to drag forth that little shred of green velvet that I had found in the coppice on the day of her abduction, and that I had kept ever since as one keeps the relic of a departed saint. Another moment, and I should have poured out the story of the mad, hopeless passion that filled my heart to bursting, when of a sudden, "Yvonne! Yvonne!" came Geneviève's fresh voice from the other end of the terrace. The spell of that moment was broken.

Methought Mademoiselle made a little gesture of impatience as she answered her sister's call; then, with a word of apology, she left me.

Half-dazed by the emotions that had made sport of me, I leant over the balustrade, and with my elbows on the stone and my chin on my palms, I stared stupidly before me, thanking God for having sent Geneviève in time to save me from again earning Mademoiselle's scorn. For as I grew sober, I did not doubt but that with scorn she would have met the wild words that already trembled on my lips.

I laughed harshly. "Gaston, Gaston," I muttered, "at thirty-two you are more a fool than ever you were at twenty."

I told myself then that my fancy had vested her tone and look with a kindliness far beyond that which they contained, and as I thought of how I had deemed impatient the little gesture wherewith she had greeted Geneviève's interruption, I laughed again.

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From the reverie into which naturally enough I lapsed, it was Mademoiselle who aroused me. She stood beside me, with an unrest of manner so unusual in her that straightway I guessed the substance of her talk with Geneviève.

"So, Mademoiselle," I said, without waiting for her to speak, "you have learnt what is afoot."

"I have," she answered. "That they love each other is no news to me. That they intend to wed does not surprise me. But that they should contemplate a secret marriage passes my comprehension."

I cleared my throat as men will when about to embark upon a parlous subject with no starting-point determined.

"It is time, Mademoiselle," I began, "that you should learn the true cause of M. de Mancini's presence at Canaples. It will enlighten you touching his motives for a secret wedding. Had things fallen out as was intended by those who planned his visit, Monsieur your father and my Lord Cardinal, it is improbable that you would ever have heard that which it now becomes necessary that I should tell you. I trust, Mademoiselle," I continued, "that you will hear me in a neutral spirit, without permitting your personal feelings to enter into your consideration of that which I shall unfold."

"So long a preface augurs anything but well," she interposed, looking monstrous serious.

"Not ill at least, I hope. Hear me, then. Your father and his Eminence are friends; the one has a daughter who is said to be very wealthy, and whom he, with fond ambition, desires to see wed to a man who can give her an illustrious name; the other possesses a nephew whom he can ennoble by the highest title that a man may bear who is not a prince of the blood—and borne indeed by few who are not—and whom he desires to see contract an alliance that will bring him enough of riches to enable him to bear his title with becoming dignity."

I glanced at Mademoiselle whose cheeks were growing an ominous red.

"Well, Mademoiselle," I continued, "your father and Monseigneur de Mazarin appear to have bared their hearts' desire to each other, and M. de Mancini was sent to Canaples to woo and win your father's elder daughter."

A long pause followed, during which she stood with face aflame, averted eyes, and heaving bosom, betraying the feelings that stormed within her at the disclosure of the bargain whereof she had been a part. At length, "Oh, Monsieur!" she exclaimed in a choking voice, and clenching her shapely hands, "to think——"

"I beseech you not to think, Mademoiselle," I interrupted, calmly; for having taken the first plunge, I was now master of myself. "The ironical little god, whom the ancients painted with bandaged eyes, has led M. de Mancini by the nose in this matter, and things have gone awry for the plotters. There, Mademoiselle, you have the reason for a clandestine union. Did Monsieur your father guess how Andrea's affections have—" I caught the word "miscarried" betimes, and substituted, "gone against his wishes, his opposition is not a thing to be doubted."

"Are you sure there is no mistake?" she inquired after a pause. "Is all this really true, Monsieur?"

"It is, indeed."

"But how comes it that my father has seen naught of what has been so plain to me—that M. de Mancini was ever at my sister's side?"

"Your father, Mademoiselle, is much engrossed in his vineyard. Moreover, when the Chevalier has been at hand, Andrea has been careful to show no greater regard for the one than for the other of you. I instructed him in this duplicity many weeks ago."

She looked at me for a moment.

"Oh, Monsieur," she cried passionately, "how deep is my humiliation! To think that I was made a part of so vile a bargain! Oh, I am glad that M. de Mancini has proved above the sordid task to which they set him, glad that he will dupe the Cardinal and my father."

"So am not I, Mademoiselle," I exclaimed.

She vouchsafed me a stare of ineffable surprise.

"How?"

"I am M. de Mancini's friend," I answered. "It was to shield him that I fought your brother; again, because of my attitude towards him was it that I went perilously near assassination at Reaux. Enemies sprang up about him when the Cardinal's matrimonial projects became known. Your brother picked a quarrel with him, and when I had dealt with your brother, St. Auban appeared, and after St. Auban there were others. When it is known that he has played this trick upon Uncle Giulio, his enemies will disappear; but, on the other hand, his prospects will all be blighted, and for that I am sorry."

"So *that* was the motive of your duel with Eugène?"

"At last you learn it."

"And," she added in a curious voice, "you would have been better pleased had M. de Mancini carried out his uncle's wishes?"

"It matters little what I would think, Mademoiselle," I answered guardedly, for I could not read that curious tone of hers.

"Nevertheless I am curious to hear your answer."

What answer could I make? The truth—that for all my fine talk I was at heart and in a sense right glad that she was not to become Andrea's wife—would have seemed ungallant. Moreover, I must have added the explanation that I desired to see her no man's wife, so that I might not seem to contradict myself. Therefore, "In truth, Mademoiselle," I answered, lying glibly, "it would have given me more pleasure had Andrea chosen to obey his Eminence."

Her manner froze upon the instant.

"In the consideration of your friend's advancement," she replied, half-contemptuously, "you forget, M. de Luynes, to consider *me*. Am I, then, a thing to be bartered into the hands of the first fortune-hunter who woos me because he has been bidden so to do, and who is to marry me for political purposes? Pshaw, M. de Luynes," she added, with a scornful laugh, "after all, I was a fool to expect aught else from——"

She checked herself abruptly, and in a sudden access of mercy left the stinging "you" unuttered. I stood by, dumb and sheepish, not understanding how the words that I had deemed gallant could have brought this tempest down upon my head. Before I could say aught that might have righted matters, or perchance made them worse, "Since you leave Canaples to-morrow," quoth she, "I will say farewell, Monsieur, for it is unlikely that we shall meet again."

With a slight inclination of her head, and withholding her hand intentionally, she moved away, whilst I stood, as only a fool or a statue would stand, and watched her go.

Once she paused, and indeed half-turned, whereupon hope knocked at my heart again; but before I had admitted it, she had resumed her walk towards the house. Hungrily I watched her lissom, graceful figure with my eyes until she had crossed the threshold. Then, with a dull ache in my breast, I flung myself upon a stone seat, and addressing myself to the setting sun for want of a better audience, I roundly reviled her sex for the knottiest puzzle that ever had plagued the mind of man in unravelling.

CHAPTER XVII.

Father and Son.

"GASTON," quoth Andrea, next morning, "you will remain at Canaples until to-morrow. You must; for to-morrow I am to be wed, and I would fain have your good wishes ere you go."

"Nice hands mine to seek a benediction at," I grumbled.

"But you will remain? Come, Gaston, we have been good friends, you and I, and who knows when next we shall meet? Believe me, I shall value your 'God speed' above all others."

"Likely enough, since it will be the only one you'll hear."

But for all my sneers he was not to be put off. He talked and coaxed so winningly that in the end, albeit I am not a man easily turned from the course he has set himself, the affectionate pleading in his fresh young voice and the affectionate look in his dark eyes won me to his way.

Forthwith I went in quest of the Chevalier, whom, at the

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indication of a lackey, I discovered in the room it pleased him to call his study, that same room into which we had been ushered on the day of our arrival at Canaples. I told him that on the morrow I must set out for Paris; and albeit he at first expressed a polite regret, yet when I had shown him how my honour was involved in my speedy return thither, he did not urge me to put off my departure.

"It grieves me, sir, that you must go, and I deeply regret the motive that is taking you. Yet I hope that his Eminence, in recognition of the services you have rendered his nephew, will see fit to forget what cause for resentment he may have against you, and render you your liberty. If you will give me leave, Monsieur, I will write to his Eminence in this strain, and you shall be the bearer of my letter."

I thanked him, with a smile of deprecation, as I thought of the true cause of Mazarin's resentment, which was precisely that upon the plea of which M. de Canaples sought to obtain for me my liberation.

"And now, Monsieur," he pursued nervously, "touching Andrea and his visit here, I would say a word to you, who are his friend, and may haply know something of his mind. It is over two months since he came here, and yet the—er—affair which we had hoped to bring about seems no nearer its conclusion than when first he came. Of late I have watched him, and I have watched Yvonne; they are certainly good friends, yet not even the frail barrier of formality appears overcome betwixt them, and I am beginning to fear that Andrea is not only lukewarm in this matter, but is forgetful of his uncle's wishes and selfishly indifferent to Monseigneur's projects and mine, which, as he well knows, are the reason of his sojourn at my Château. What think you of this, M. de Luynes?"

He shot a furtive glance at me as he spoke, and with his long, lean forefinger he combed his beard in a nervous fashion.

I gave a short laugh to cover my embarrassment at the question. "What do I think, Monsieur?" I echoed, to gain time. Then, thinking that a sententious answer would be the most fitting. "Love is as the spark that lies latent in flint and steel. For days and weeks these two may be as close together as you please, and naught will come of it; but one fine day a hand—the hand of chance—will strike the one against the other, and lo! the spark is born."

"You speak in parables, Monsieur," was his caustic comment.

"'Tis in parables that all religions are preached," I returned, "and love, methinks, is a great religion in this world."

"Love, sir, love!" he cried petulantly. "The word makes me sick. What has love to do with this union? Love, sir, is a pretty theme for poets, romancers, and fools. The imagination of such a sentiment—for it is a sentiment that does not live save in the imagination—may serve to draw peasants and other low-bred clods into wedlock. With such as we—with gentlemen—it has naught to do. So let that be, Monsieur. Andrea de Mancini came hither to wed my daughter."

"And I am certain, Monsieur," I answered stoutly, "that Andrea *will* wed your daughter."

"You speak with confidence."

"I know Andrea well. Signs that may be hidden to you are clear to me, and I have faith in my prophecy."

He looked at me and fell a victim to my confidence of manner. The petulancy died out of his face.

"Well, well! We will hope. My lord Cardinal is to create him duke, and he will assume as title his wife's estate, becoming known to history as Andrea de Mancini, Duke de Canaples. Thus shall a great house be founded that will bear our name. You see the importance of it?"

"Clearly."

"And how reasonable is my anxiety?"

"Assuredly."

"And you are in sympathy with me?"

"Doesn't it appear so? Why else did I go so near to killing your son?"

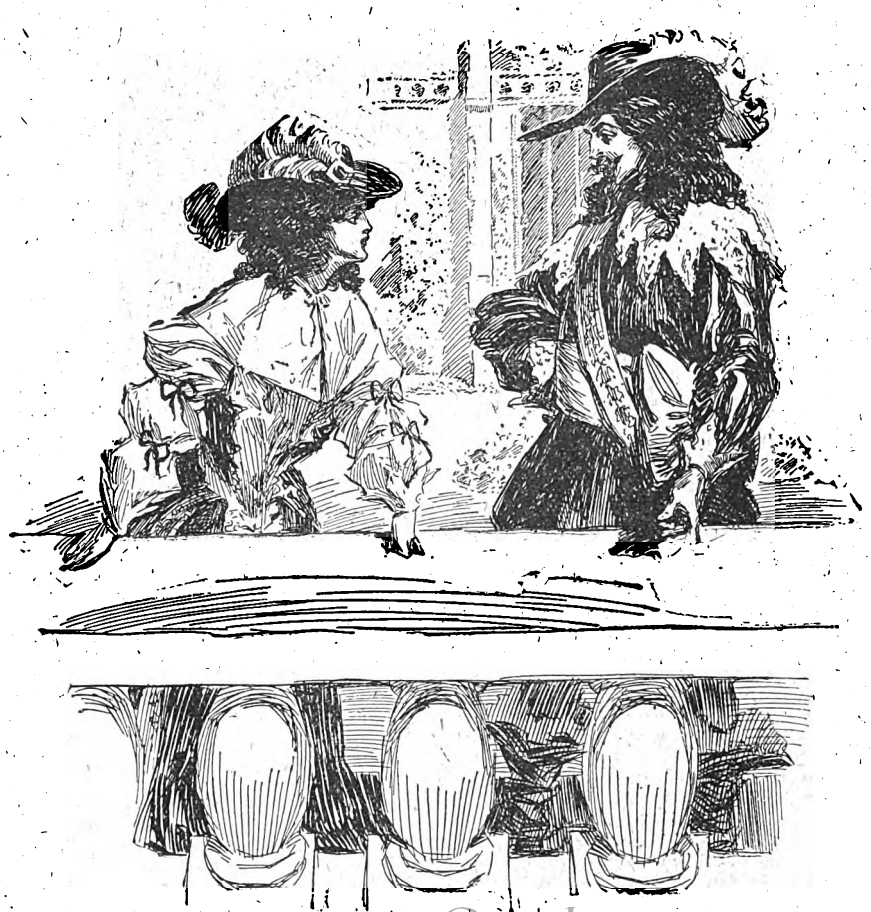
"True," he mused; then suddenly he added, "by the way, have you heard that Eugène has become one of the leaders of these *frondeur* madmen?"

"Ah! Then he is quite recovered?"

"Unfortunately!" he assented, with a grimace, and thus our interview ended.

That day wore slowly to its close. I wandered hither and thither in the château and the grounds, hungering throughout the long hours for a word with Mademoiselle—a glimpse of her, at least.

But all day long she kept her chamber, the pretext being that



"Are you sure there is no mistake?" she inquired after a pause.

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she was suffering from indisposition. By accident I came upon her that evening, at last, in the *salon*, yet my advent was the signal for her departure, and all the words she had for me were, "Still at Canaples, Monsieur? I thought you were to have left this morning." She looked paler than her wont, and her eyes were somewhat red.

"I am remaining until to-morrow," said I awkwardly.

"Indeed!" was all she answered, and she was gone.

Next morning the Chevalier and I breakfasted alone. Mademoiselle's indisposition was worse. Geneviève was nursing, so her maid brought word, whilst Andrea had gone out an hour before and was not returned.

The Chevalier shot me an apologetic glance across the board.

"'Tis a poor 'God speed' to you, M. de Luynes."

I made light of it, and turned the conversation into an indifferent channel, wherein it abided until, filling himself a bumper of Anjou, the Chevalier solemnly drank to my safe journey and good fortune in Paris.

At the moment Andrea entered by the door abutting on to the terrace balcony. He was flushed, and his eyes sparkled with a joyous fever. Profuse was he in his apologies, which, howbeit, were passing vague in character, and which he brought to a close by pledging me as the Chevalier had done already.

As we rose, Geneviève appeared with the news that Yvonne was somewhat better, adding that she had come to take leave of me. Her composure surprised me gladly; for albeit in her eyes there was also a tell-tale light, her lids, demurely downcast as was her wont, amply screened it from the vulgar gaze.

Andrea would tell his father-in-law of the marriage later in the day; and for all that I am not a chicken-hearted man, still I had no stomach to be at hand when the storm exploded.

The moment having come for my departure, and Michelot awaiting me already with the horses in the courtyard, M. de Canaples left us to seek the letter which I was to carry to his Eminence. So soon as the door had closed upon him, Andrea came forward, leading his bride by the hand, and asked me to wish them happiness.

"With all my heart," I answered; "and if happiness be accorded you in a measure with the fervency of my wishes then shall you indeed be happy. Each of you I congratulate upon the companion in life you have chosen. Cherish him, Mademoi—Madame, for he is loyal and true, and such are rare in this world."

It is possible that I might have said more in this benign and fatherly strain, for it seemed to me that this new *rôle* I had assumed suited me wondrous well, but a shadow that drew our eyes towards the nearest window interrupted me. And what we saw there drew a cry from Andrea, a shudder from Geneviève, and from me a gasp that was half-amazement, half-dismay. For leaning upon the sill, surveying us with a sardonic, evil grin, we beheld Eugène de Canaples, the man whom I had left with a sword thrust through his middle, behind the Hôtel Vendôme two months ago. Whence was he sprung, and why came he thus to his father's house?

He started as I faced him, for doubtless St. Auban had boasted to him that he had killed me in a duel. For a moment he remained at the window, then he disappeared, and we could hear the ring of his spurred heel as he walked along the balcony towards the door.

And simultaneously came the quick, hurrying steps of the Chevalier de Canaples as he crossed the hall, returning with the letter he had gone to fetch.

Geneviève shuddered again, and looked fearfully from one door to the other; Andrea drew a sharp breath like a man in pain, whilst I rapped out an oath to brace my nerves for the scene which we all three foresaw. Then in silence we waited, some subtle instinct warning us of the disaster that impended.

The steps on the balcony halted, and a second later those in the hall; and then, as though the thing had been rehearsed and timed so that the spectators might derive the utmost effect from it, the doors opened together, and on the opposing thresholds, with the width of the room betwixt them, stood father and son confronted.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of How I Left Canaples.

Whilst a man might perchance count a dozen did those two remain motionless, the one eyeing the other. But their bearing was as widely different as their figures; Eugène's stalwart frame stood firm and erect, insolence in every line of it, reflected perchance from the smile that lurked about the corners of his thin-lipped mouth.

The hat, which he had not had the grace to doff, set jauntily upon his straight black hair; the jerkin of leather which he wore, and the stout sword which hung from the plainest of belts, all served to give him the air of a ruffler or tavern knight.

The Chevalier, on the other hand, stood as if turned to stone. From his enervated fingers the letter fluttered to the ground, and in his pale, thin face was to be read a displeasure mixed with fear.

At length, with an oath, the old man broke the silence.

"What seek you at Canaples?" he asked in a quivering voice, as he advanced into the room. "Are you so dead to shame that you dare present yourself with such effrontery? Off with your hat, sir," he blazed, stamping his foot, and going from pale to crimson. "Off with your hat, or by Heaven, I'll have you flung out of doors by my grooms."

This show of vehemence, as sudden as it was unexpected, drew from Eugène a meek obedience that I had not looked for. Nevertheless, the young man's lip curled as he uncovered.

"How fatherly is your greeting," he sneered.

The Chevalier's eyes flashed a glance that lacked no venom at his son.

"What manner of greeting did you look for?" he returned hotly. "Did you expect me to set a ring upon your finger and have the fattest calf killed in honour of your return? Good Heavens, sir! Have you come hither to show me how a father should welcome the profligate son who has dishonoured his name? Why are you here, unbidden? Answer me, sir."

A deep flush overspread Eugène's cheeks.

"I had thought when I crossed the threshold this was the Château de Canaples, or else that my name was Canaples, I know not which. Clearly I was mistaken, for here is a lady who has no word either of greeting or intercession for me, and who therefore cannot be my sister, and yonder a man whom I should never look to find in my father's house."

I took a step forward, a hot answer on my lips, when from the doorway at my back came Yvonne's sweet voice, "Eugène! You here?"

"As you see, sister. Though had you delayed your coming, 'tis probable you would no longer have found me; for your father welcomes me with oaths and threatens me with his grooms."

She cast a reproachful glance upon the Chevalier, 'neath which the anger seemed to die out of him; then she went forward with hands outstretched and a sad smile upon her lips.

"Yvonne!" The Chevalier's voice rang out sharp and sudden. "I forbid you approach that man!"

For a moment she appeared to hesitate, then leisurely pursuing her way, she set her hands upon her brother's shoulders and embraced him.

The Chevalier swore through set teeth, Geneviève trembled, Andrea looked askance, and I laughed softly at the Chevalier's discomfiture. Eugène flung his hat and cloak in a corner, and strode across the room to where his father stood.

"And now, Monsieur, since I have travelled all the way from Paris to save my house from a step that will bring it into the contempt of all France, I shall not go until you have heard me."

The Chevalier shrugged his shoulders, and made as if to turn away. Yvonne's greeting of her brother appeared to have quenched the spark of spirit that for a moment had glimmered in the little man's breast.

"Monsieur," cried Eugène, "believe me that what I have to say is of the utmost importance, and say it I will, whether before these strangers or in your private car shall be as you elect."

The old man glanced about him like one who seeks a way of escape. At last—"If say it you must," he growled, "say it here and now. And when you have said it, go."

Eugène scowled at me, and from me to Andrea. To pay him for that scowl I had it in my mind to stay; but overcoming the clownish thought I took Andrea by the arm.

"Come, Andrea," I said, "we will take a turn outside while these family matters are in discussion."

I had a shrewd idea what was the substance of Eugène's mission to Canaples—to expostulate with his father touching the proposed marriage of Yvonne to the Cardinal's nephew.

Nor was I wrong; for when, some moments later, the Chevalier recalled us from the terrace, where we were strolling, "What think you he has come hither to tell me?" he inquired as we entered. He pointed to his son as he spoke, and passion shook his slender frame as the breeze shakes a leaf. Mademoiselle and Geneviève sat hand in hand, Yvonne deadly pale, Geneviève weeping.

"What think you he has the effrontery to say? It seems that he has profited little by the lesson you read him in the horse-market about meddling in matters which concern him not. He has come hither to tell me that *he* will not permit his sister to wed the Cardinal's nephew; that *he* will not have the estates of Canaples pass into the hands of a foreign upstart. *He* forsooth—*he! he! he!*" And at each utterance of the pronoun he lunged with his forefinger in the direction of his son. "This is he not ashamed to utter before Yvonne herself."

"You compelled me to do so," cried Eugène angrily.

"I?" ejaculated the Chevalier. "Did I compel you to come hither with your 'I will' and 'I will not'? Who are you that you should give laws at Canaples? And he adds, sir," quoth the old knight excitedly, "that sooner than allow this marriage to take place he will kill M. de Mancini."

"I shall be happy to afford him the opportunity!" shouted Andrea, bounding forward.

Eugène looked up quickly and gave a short laugh. Thereupon followed a wild hubbub; everyone rushed forward and everyone talked, even little Geneviève—louder than all the rest.

"You shall not fight! You shall not fight!" she cried, and her voice was so laden with command that all others grew silent, and all eyes we returned upon her.

"What affair is this of yours, little one?" quoth Eugene.

"'Tis this," she answered panting, "that you need fear no marriage 'twixt my sister and Andrea."

In her eagerness she had cast caution to the winds of Heaven. Her father and brother stared askance at her; I gave an inward groan.

"Andrea!" echoed Eugène at last. "What is this man to you that you speak thus of him?"

The girl flung herself upon her father's breast.

"Father," she sobbed, "dear father, forgive!"

The Chevalier's brow grew dark; roughly he seized her by the arms, and, holding her at arms' length, scanned her face.

"What, must I forgive?" he inquired in a thick voice. "What is M. de Mancini to you?"

Some sinister note in her father's voice caused the girl to grow of a sudden calm and to assume a rigidity that reminded me of her sister.

"He is my husband," she answered, and there was a note of pride, almost of triumph, in her voice.

An awful silence followed the launching of that thunderbolt. Eugène stood with open mouth, staring now at Geneviève, now at his father. Andrea set his arm about his bride's waist, and her fair head was laid trustingly upon his shoulder. The Chevalier's eyes rolled ominously. At length he spoke in a dangerously calm voice.

"How long is it—how long have you been wed?"

"Out of my house—you and this wife of yours."

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"We were wed in Blois an hour ago," answered Geneviève.

Something that was like a grunt escaped the Chevalier, then his eye fastened upon me, and his anger boiled up.

"You knew of this?" he asked, coming towards me.

"I knew of it."

"Then you lied to me yesterday."

I drew myself up, stiff as a broomstick.

"I do not understand," I answered coldly.

"Did you not give me your assurance that M. de Mancini would marry Yvonne?"

"I did not, Monsieur. I did but tell you that he would wed *your daughter*. And by Heaven, your daughter he has wed."

"You have fooled me, you knave!" he blazed forth. "You, who have been sheltered by—— "

"Father!" Yvonne interrupted, taking his arm, "M. de Luynes has behaved no worse than have I, or any one of us in this matter."

"No!" he cried, and pointed to Andrea. "'Tis you who have wrought this infamy. Eugène," he exclaimed, turning of a sudden to his son, "you have a sword; wipe out this shame."

"Shame!" echoed Geneviève. "Oh, father, where is the shame? If it were no shame for Andrea to marry Yvonne, surely—— "

"Silence!" he thundered. "Eugène!"

But Eugène answered him with a contemptuous laugh. "You are quick enough to call upon my sword now that things have not fallen out as you would have them. Where are your grooms now, Monsieur?"

"Insolent hound!" cried his father indignantly. Then, letting fall his arms with something that was near akin to a sob, "Is there no one left to do aught but mock me?" he groaned.

But this weakness was no more than momentary. "Out of my house, sir!" he blazed, turning upon Andrea, and for a moment methought he would have struck him. "Out of my house—you and this wife of yours."

"Father!" sobbed Geneviève, with hands outstretched in intreaty.

"Out of my house," he repeated, "and you, also, Master de Luynes. Away with you! Go with the master you have served so well." And turning on his heel, he strode towards the door.

"Father—dear father!" cried Geneviève, following him, He slammed the door in her face for answer.

With a moan she sank down upon her knees, her frail body shaken by convulsive sobs. Oh, Heaven! What a bridal morn was hers.

Andrea and Yvonne raised her and led her to a chair. Eugène watched them with a cynical eye, then laughed brutally, and gathering up his hat and cloak, he moved towards the balcony door and vanished.

"Is M. de Luynes still there?" quoth Geneviève presently.

"I am here, Mademoiselle."

"You had best set out, Monsieur," she said. "We shall follow soon—very soon."

I took Andrea aside and asked him whither it was his intention to take his wife. He replied that they would go to Chambord, where they would remain for some weeks in the hope that the Chevalier might relent sufficiently to forgive them. Thereafter it was his purpose to take his wife home to his Sicilian demesne.

Our farewells were soon spoken, yet none the less warm for all its brevity was my leave-taking of Andrea, and our wishes for each other's happiness were as fervent as the human heart can shape. We little thought that we were not destined to meet again for years.

Yvonne's farewell was cold and formal—so cold and formal that it seemed to rob the sunshine of its glory for me as I stepped out into the open air.

After all, what mattered it? I was a fool to have entertained a single tender thought concerning her.

(To be continued.)

Special Notice

Part I. of "Famous Pictures of the World" comes out on Friday, and every reader of Short Stories should make a point at least of turning over the pages of this superb production, to judge whether or not it seems worth buying at a shilling. There is not the slightest doubt that anyone who has once seen a part of the "Famous Pictures" will rest content until it is bought. In "Famous Pictures of the World" the masterpieces of the greatest painters are reproduced in all the glory, beauty, and delicacy of the natural colouring. Each part contains nine beautiful pictures, ready for framing—the first, ready on Friday, contains the finest works of Greuze, Millais, Titian, Leader, Burne-Jones, and others. The second part will be ready on February 14th, the third on February 28th. All readers should note these dates, and remember that "Famous Pictures of the World," price one shilling each part, contains the most beautiful reproductions, in colours, of the world's choicest art, that ever have been published.

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The Man who Hated Children.

Be pleased to consider how small are the beginnings of things—big things. When he was yet a very young fellow, say seventeen or eighteen, and spending a sweltering August at a seaside resort, Stamford made the remark that little children bored him and that he hated them. This was more or less true, for a boy of eighteen hasn't the moral right to hate anybody, especially children. Young Stamford had made the remark for the sake of effect. Some girls were about and he wanted to astonish them.

Stamford didn't hate children at all; quite the contrary, as events proved. But once having made the remark, he had to live up to it. So he went about that resort saying, "I hate children, I hate children!" till he made people believe him, and ended by believing it himself. A lie never seems so true as when it has been crystallised into words.

Stamford had very arbitrarily chosen his hatred of children as his fad, and he wore this nasty fad conspicuously, as some African tribesman might wear a hideous ornament, until it grows into his flesh and becomes almost a part of him. Stamford's "pet aversion" became almost—I say almost—a part of him, and he nursed it and fostered it until it developed hugely, so that he actually believed that he could not stay in the same room with an active, noisy little child, boy or girl.

"I can't help it," he would say. "It's an instinct, like some people's aversion to cats. Let 'em be old enough to take care of themselves, and I don't mind; but a nasty, mewling, salmon-pink baby, all head and red dough— B-r-r!" Thus Stamford, with a shudder of horror that he believed was genuine. And all the while, way down in his heart of hearts he was a kindly, lovable fellow, with no more dislike for babies than you or I or the rest of us.

Three years after he was married his first baby was born—a girl.

Stamford loved his wife—no man better. They two had a delicious little house right out in the country. It was far enough removed from the end of the world of the nearest town, to be near enough to Heaven for all practical purposes, and for three years Stamford lived out the dearest period of his life there, wallowing in happiness, as one might say, fairly miring himself in the pure delight of being alive—and married, married to Mrs. Stamford. For she was a dear, beautiful girl, and the pair loved each other better than most people.

When the little girl was born Stamford said to me, across his smoking-table (we were in the billiard-room and the wheels of the doctor's trap were just grating off down the road), Stamford said, or rather whispered, because Mrs. Stamford's room was just above:

"I can't help it, Sturgis, it's an instinct. I suppose I was born with an aversion to children (he really believed he was honest), and I'll die with it. I'm that baby's father, but till it gets old I shall hate it, I know I shall. I don't want to see it"—he made a squiriming movement with one shoulder—"I'd rather have a blind kitten crammed down my back than have the touch of that child on me. You can't understand that, can you?"

"No, I can't," says I, "and I think you are a horrible unfeeling brute, that should be well kicked—you wretch."

"That is all quite true," he answered, "I am worse than a brute, for even a brute cares for its whelps; but give me time. When she grows up I suppose I shall like her."

"Suppose you shall like your daughter? Now that sounds fine. Where's my hat?"

"Going?"

"Sorry I came!"

"Well, you know how it is," said he at the door. "It's an unreasoned instinct. I can't help it. I hate children, and all's said. Think of feeling it clawing at your nose and ears. It gives me shudders to think of it!"

Here I couldn't stand him any longer so went away. If you know anything of men's friendships, you will have understood from the preceding conversation that Stamford and I were the best chums in the world. That is why, five years later, when I came back to the place again I went straight to Stamford's house. I had heard a good deal about him during those intervening five years and was prepared for changes. But even at that, the difference was poignant. The little house stood buried in weeds, the gate was gone and the small panes of the windows smashed.

Stamford opened the door for me. Evidently he had not shaved that week. He was in his stocking feet. His eyes looked at me out of saucers of brown skin. The place reeked of stale tobacco smoke, and it did not need the sight of the unmade bed nor the cigar stumps in the card tray to tell me that Stamford was living there alone.

Towards two o'clock that night, over his tenth brandy-and-water and his last cigar, Stamford told me the tale of the things that had happened.

"It began all of a sudden on one day," said he, his hands on his chin, glowering into the fire grate. "'Jack' (that was Mrs. Stamford) had been up about a week. I hadn't so much as seen Emmie yet, and Jack and I had almost quarrelled about her. Jack had begged me just to look into the room while she was asleep, but I couldn't—I mean that I wouldn't do it. One Sunday afternoon when Emmie was about three weeks old, I was stretched out on the sofa here sort of half-asleep, when Jack came up to me very softly, and before I knew it put Emmie into my arms.

"'Joe,' she says, 'look at her now, your little daughter, how can you help loving her—' She was going to say something else, but she never got further than that. Emmie snuggled down into my neck and put her little fists into my face. I jumped up and pushed her, almost threw her, from me, recoiling as though a snake had touched me.

"'Take it away,' I cried. 'For Heaven's sake take it away, I hate it and loathe it, and I always will hate it!'

"Jack was only a week out of bed. I don't need to tell you how delicately poised a woman is at such a time as that, how tangled and jagged her nerves are. The doctors have got names for it all. She heard what I said, and saw me thrusting my little daughter away from me. Then she looked at me once in—I say she gave me—she—you see"—Stamford cleared his throat—"she gave a little sigh, and went down softly into a little heap on the floor.

"She was in the hospital about a month, and for a time we thought she would never be right in the head again. I wasn't allowed to see her, and her folks took Emmie. After a month's time, though, the doctors brought her round all right; said she had pulled through sound as a nut, and that I might see her. She knew I was coming. They had her propped up in a big deck-chair by a window. I had sent her a lot of flowers and she wore some of them.

"When I came into the room I saw her leaning back there in the deck-chair. She looked up at me and smiled, happy as could be to see me. Then all at once her expression changed to one of the most abject horror and revulsion. She put up her hands to shut out the sight of me, and cried out, 'No, no, I can't. Take him away, oh, somebody take him away!' It was no use reasoning with her, she got hysterical, screamed and fought from me as though I were a leper or a murderer. I had to go, and as soon as I was gone she was quiet again. Couldn't understand herself how it had happened.

"The doctors said I could come the next day, and as soon as Jack heard my foot on the stairs she fainted with the pure horror of the thought of seeing me. She had forgiven me my brutality with Emmie, loved me as much as ever, mark you, longed to see me as much as I onged to see her, and yet went mad with loathing as soon as I came near. This was the one point of insanity of which the doctors could not cure her. They have never been able to cure her. We have tried everything. She can't even see my handwriting without that horrible revulsion seizing upon her. But she can write to me and she does, and that's how I know she is suffering as much as I.

"How much we two have gone through, Heaven only knows. Can you imagine the horror of the situation? We are as dear to each other as ever—more so," he cried, digging his nails into his temples, "more so. We are here, here in the same place, where I can see her every day, and yet we are worlds apart. It's a death in life, a death in life," and he rocked himself to and fro in his place. "Every Sunday we have arranged that she shall go to church. She tells me where she sits, and I go up in the gallery and peep at her from behind pillars. Even that is bad for her, but she can stand it for an hour once a week. Once she caught sight of me and——" He broke off suddenly and closed his eyes.

"And Emmie?" said I.

"Emmie will be eight to-morrow. Here's a lot of pictures that Jack has sent me from time to time. Isn't she the finest little girl you ever saw, and bright, bright as a new pin."

"How about her?" I asked him. "You manage to see her when her mother's not by, I suppose."

I saw the knuckles of Stamford's fist whiten suddenly.

"Emmie is—is like—Emmie takes after her mother. By the way, you have some little nieces, haven't you? What do you give 'em on Christmas, and—and on their birthdays and such like? Emmie's eight to-morrow. Books wouldn't do, would they, eh? Is she too old for toys—or too young? Here's what I got her. I thought I'd take the chances on toys."

He turned to the table and undid a few packages.

"There's a little doll," he said, "and you see," he added proudly, "she closes her eyes when you lay her down, and there's a doll's house; aren't those little chairs and tables sweet? I fancy Emmie will like those all right. I can just see her eyes stick out when she undoes the package. I think I'll get a big doll house like that for my kindergarten—I've started a kind of a kindergarten in the town that you must see. And here, look at this. Here's another thing I am going to send to Emmie. Catch hold of this. Here's a little pump, and, by Jove, you can pump real water in it, see," and he showed me how it worked. "I wonder if Emmie will know that you can pump 'truly' water with it? Tell you what, you write it on a card and put it in, will you?"

"Why not you?"

"Well—you see, they might recognise my handwriting."

"Shan't I say," said I, pen in hand, "that it all comes from you, with many happy birthdays?"

"Not that, above all things," said Stamford. "I can't forget all that's happened."

* * * * *

Ten years passed before I again visited Stamford, and then what a change I found. The house no longer bore a deserted look, but was in good repair; the garden, too, had been put into decent order.

I was thus prepared for a change in Stamford himself, and was not disappointed, his appearance being smart and well cared-for as it had been in the old days.

The house inside evidenced the presence of a feminine hand, and at luncheon a pretty girl of about eighteen occupied a seat at one end of the table; Stamford introduced her to me as his daughter.

When we were having a chat over our cigars in his den Stamford told me that not long after my previous visit his wife had died and with her last words had intrusted little Emmie to his care. She did not take to him at all at first, but after a time they became great friends, and since then had become inseparable companions, despite the great disparity in age.

"I don't hate children now," were his last words, as I left him.

FRANK NORRIS.

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2. Moving air; cured pork	2	
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4. Native of Scotland	4	
5. Happy pebble	5	
6. Male fowls	6	
7. Place of worship; raised ground	7	
8. All soaked bread	8	
9. Room; country thoroughfare	9	
10. Channel worn by water	10	
11. Not old	11	
12. Poison	12	
13. Grows on the Head	13	
14. Force	14	
15. Vessel with two masts, square rigged	15	
16. Unclothed	16	
17. Armour for the head	17	
18. Rod; not high	18	
19. To agitate by heat	19	
20. Valiant	20	
21. To murder	21	
22. Chief; Valley	22	
23. Hairless gain	23	
24. A reed stem	24	
25. Found in a church steeple	25	
26. Equally divided into partitions	26	
27. Store	27	
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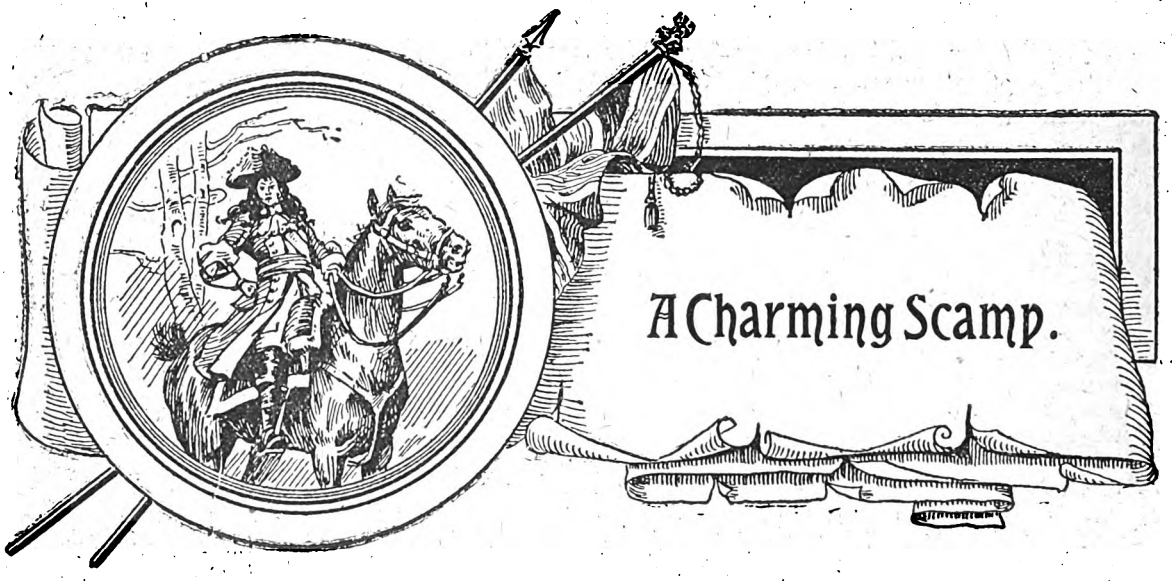

A Charming Scamp.

LILITH DREW was out of sorts—her maid said out of temper; and judging by the red eyes of the latter, and her limp appearance generally, it might be supposed she had good reason for the supposition. And yet it was difficult to gather what could have ruffled her young mistress; of all persons in the world, old Drew's only daughter, one would think, had little of which to complain—money, and all that money buys, an adoring father, an obedient mother, coupled with youth and a fair share of good looks, what could the girl want besides?

This day, at all events, she should have been all smiles. It was her birthday, and the dainty morning room hung with her favourite shade of pale pink silk, was littered with a profusion of dainty gifts, costly trifles, flowers, jewellery, bonbons, all the thousand and one expensive fripperies dear to the feminine heart.

"Why, Lilith," exclaimed her cousin Marion, "I don't think you've ever had so many presents. What a lucky girl you are!"

"You can have them all so far as I'm concerned. I don't care a rap for any of them."

"Not even for this, Lil?" holding up a costly bracelet from its nest of pale blue velvet.

"For that least of all. He has no business to send me such a thing. He has no right! The idea of a mere acquaintance sending me a present of the kind. Give it me, Marion, I'll send it back at once."

"At least wait until you've spoken to auntie, Lilith. You really can't call Harold Vincent 'a mere acquaintance,' and it would be an insult in any case to send it back. After all, the poor man's only crime is that he cares too much for you."

"Yes, that is it—he cares too much—others too little."

Marion's fair face clouded. She was devoted to her wilful cousin, and had power to soothe the sudden gusts of passion which came over the girl when no one else was able to control or comfort her. But this was a new phase, and she was puzzled.

"Dearest," she said gently, "you are keeping something back from me. What can trouble you, Lilith—on your birthday?"

"My birthday!" said the girl scornfully. "To think that I have waited months and months for to-day only to be disappointed. I was so certain I should be happy this morning, and now—now I am so miserable that I could cry my heart out. Can't you see that I am suffering—wretched? Oh, Marion, Marion, say something kind to me, say something——" The girl's voice died away into a passionate sob.

"Is it Elliot Raeburn?" asked Marion, in a half-fearful tone of voice.

The slight figure, prone upon a heap of silken cushions, stirred uneasily.

"Yes."

"But, Lilith, I thought——"

"I don't mind what you thought, or anything else, Marion. All that I care about is this—I love him, and I thought he cared for me. And now—now I awake to find I have been fooled. That what to me was all too real, was but to him a pastime.

"When we first came back to town," she went on more quietly, "after the summer that we spent in Wales — that never-to-be-forgotten summer when I met him — he used to write regularly. Indeed, up till within six months ago I had a letter nearly every morning. And then the letters stopped quite suddenly, and in my foolish pride I did not write to ask the reason. And so I have eaten out my heart waiting for this, my birthday; hoping, longing, praying for one word from him. And none has come.

"He is so proud," she added, in answer to the unspoken protest on her cousin's face. "I used to beg him to see my father and explain that we were engaged,

but he said he would not till he'd made a name. 'Some day, sweetheart, I vow I will be famous, and then we will be happy ever after!' Those were his words, Marion, and I believed him."

"'Tis possible he may be coming to see you!" suggested Marion weakly, not with the faintest belief in the probability of such a thing, but with the desire of turning Lilith's thoughts. "Anyway, you ought to be prepared; besides, you'll have all sorts of questions asked if you mope about all day dissolved in tears."

But Lilith needed no further spur. The hope, the glimmer of a hope that she might see him was enough, and later no one would have recognised in the bright girl who, side by side with Harold Vincent, cantered gaily down the Row—no one, I say, could possibly have recognised in her the despairing creature who, but an hour ago, had sobbed her heart out on her cousin's shoulder.

By the evening all traces of her grief had vanished, and she was radiant in her gown of soft white satin ready for the ball.

"I won't let myself care," she told Marion, with a laugh that somehow ended in a sob. "I'll flirt, let Harry Vane make love to me, and drive Vincent mad with jealousy. You'd think that I was worth remembering, wouldn't you?" she asked, standing in front of a tall mirror, which surely had never held the likeness of a fairer woman.

Tall and slight, with wavy, dark-brown hair and eyes of the same soft hue, she seemed to Harold Vincent the spirit of loveliness, and as she moved towards him in the ball-room, the colour coming and going on her rounded cheeks, he caught his breath and vowed that life was worth nothing without her love.

Marion, watching her cousin from the friendly shelter of a palm, whither her own lover, Sydney Rowth, Vincent's greatest friend, had taken her, thought she had never seen so beautiful a face.

"I wish Lilith cared for Harold Vincent!" she thought regretfully. "It seems such a folly for her to dream of marrying Elliot Raeburn." And then she sighed at the remembrance of her cousin's grief, until Sydney gazed at her in wonder.

"I don't think you have been listening to me, Marion," he said stiffly. "I've been telling you all about the post I have been offered at St. Petersburg."

But Marion had risen to her feet and, all unmindful of her sweetheart's gravely disappointed air, had hastened to her cousin's side.

"What is it dear?" she asked fearfully, at sight of her agitated face.

For answer Lilith handed her a note, and obeying the intreaty in those soft brown eyes, Marion hurried with her from the room.

"It is from him," she whispered; "and he wants me, prays me, to meet him, if but for a moment in the square."

As she spoke she hastily put on a long dark cloak and fastened a piece of lace about her pretty head.

"You can't go, Lil! Are you mad, to dream of such a thing?"

"I tell you," answered the girl, "that nothing shall stop me. I *must* go. Even now," she added tearfully, "it may be too late. He must have been waiting hours before I got the note."

Argument was useless. All Marion could do was to go with her cousin, and if possible cut short the interview. She had never been much impressed with Elliot Raeburn. His was too complex, too sensitive a nature for the somewhat Puritanical little maiden to understand. But the very qualities that Marion most distrusted appealed irresistibly to Lilith, and, as she had said, if he desired her, nothing would keep her from his side.

Lil was downstairs, and had reached the door which opened from the garden, at the back of the house, into the square before Marion had collected her somewhat scattered faculties sufficiently to follow her. And when at last she overtook Lilith it was to find her clinging tightly to her lover, Elliot Raeburn.

Something in his face choked back the indignation that poor Marion felt, and though she despised herself for the sensation, she was even constrained to feelings of pity, shallow, worthless, as she deemed him. He looked so pale, so worn, so—so shabby in the moonlight, and yet with it all there was a nameless charm about him, a subtle fascination, which Marion acknowledged, even when she found expression for her wrath, in the title which she privately bestowed on him of "a charming scamp!"

The younger son of a younger son, he had run through his slender patrimony and, save for a tumble-down old place in Wales, had nothing left to call his own—except his genius.

"And that," reflected Marion sagely, "is worse than useless without work."

"And why did you never write? Did you cease to care for me, Elliot?"

Marion moved into the shade, and hated Elliot once again for the fascination that he held for Lilith.

"I can never cease to care, my darling! I can never cease to love you. My love is as unalterable as fate. It is part of myself, and can only end with life. But for you it is different; you are so fair, so sweet. What right have I to cast a shade over your bright young life?"

"And I," said Lilith, "can only give you your own words in answer: 'My love for you is unalterable as fate!' But, tell me, dear, why have you not written for so long?"

He was silent for a while, and the moonlight showed the tightening of his lips.

"It's a sorry tale, Lil," he whispered. "I was determined when we parted on that summer day two years ago to do my utmost to make a name—position—in the world. For a while I worked hard, and my pictures sold well, and then—I got discouraged; waiting was weary work, and I drifted into gambling, betting, until I woke one day to find myself without a sou."

"Why did you not write to me? Why——"

"Dear heart!" he whispered fondly: "how could I tell you such a tale of failure and of folly? After a bit I pulled myself together and did fairly well, and now, now I am going to Italy to try once more—perhaps to fail!"

"No, not to fail, for my sake, for the sake of the love I bore you."

And then she whispered her belief in him; how nothing could or should shake her confidence and faith.

"Whatever happens, dear," she said, and no words can paint the tenderness with which she spoke; "whatever happens remember that I love you now and always."

"Now and always," he repeated, and their lips clung in a long passionate kiss.

Marion felt half-guilty that she had to break the spell, and crept unwillingly to Lilith's side.

"You must come now, dear," she whispered. "Say 'good-bye' and get it over."

"For how long, Elliot?" cried his sweetheart. "For how long?"

And no one—even Marion never knew—the pang she suffered when he answered with a sigh:

"At least five years."

It seemed an eternity to two-and-twenty year old Lilith, but she turned a brave face to her lover and quietly followed Marion to the gate.

Then a thought seemed to strike her.

"Go quickly and fetch my portrait off the table, will you, Marion? You know the one I mean—the miniature in the morocco case. I'll go back and ask Elliot to meet me at the corner." And, like a flash, Lilith disappeared.

Marion was flurried, vexed with herself for countenancing Lilith's indiscretion, annoyed with Lilith, more than all, angered with Elliot. Agitated and fearful, she hurried up the stairs and fumbled in the semi-darkness of the room till she found the case required, then once more she fluttered down and waited for her cousin.

"I have found it, Lil," she said. "Promise me to go at once into the ball-room and I'll take it."

With a smile the beauty promised, pausing until Marion had closed the door.

Elliot was standing by a gas-lamp, and Marion's heart beat apprehensively as she approached him.

"Here," she said breathlessly, glancing over her shoulder; "please take it quickly."

A hand grasped the case, also her own slight palm. Marion turned indignantly and tried to free herself, but as she faced the man who held her, her anger faded to a dull, cold fear, and her voice dropped into a moan.

For the figure who stood there in the lamplight, with a white set face and flashing eyes, was Sydney Rowth—her lover.

In a dull sort of way she followed the direction of his gaze; it rested on the case she held. Marion drew nearer; for a moment she fancied she must be dreaming, dazed, and then the truth, the cruel truth, broke upon her.

She had thought to meet Elliot Raeburn with her cousin's portrait, and instead, she'd met her lover—and brought Lilith's diamond bracelet, Vincent's birthday gift!

"I shall of course inform Vincent"—could it be Sydney who was speaking in those cruel, relentless tones?—"it is only due to your cousin to do so. Otherwise this evening's proceedings will not be mentioned—by me, at all events. Of course you will understand everything is at an end between us."

If he had struck her she felt she could have borne it better.

"I may mention," he went on, "that I saw your meeting this evening in the square, and waited here with the intention of settling with—with the man you met—whom you doubtless intended to present with your cousin's diamonds."

Not a suggestion that she might have an explanation to offer, an excuse to make. No, all was over. She had been seen and, therefore, was condemned.

She followed Sydney into the house and waited while he fetched Vincent to the library. She never dreamt of giving up her cousin's secret—Marion was loyal and true as steel—and stood, a forlorn and pitiful little figure, by the window. Only when it was over and he had gone did she turn with streaming eyes and outstretched hands towards the door:

"My heart is broken!" she sobbed; "my heart is broken!" and staggering, fell.

And Vincent, as he lifted the slight form from the ground, felt that, in spite of all appearances, somehow she was not guilty.

And through the night his brain was haunted by the memory of that fair, soft face, that low, despairing cry: "My heart is broken!"

* * * * *

Lilith Drew had always been something of a puzzle to her friends, and was generally spoken of in Society as capricious, to say the least of it. But when, after six seasons, the wilful beauty still remained single, and persistently refused one brilliant offer after another, she was regarded as a most profound enigma, and as much by her own people as mere acquaintances.

Vincent had long given up his quest as hopeless, and had gone abroad, presumably to forget his heartache. As for Lilith herself, she had grown softer, more even-tempered, and, if possible, lovelier than ever. Inexpressibly dear to Marion, she had of late understood something of her little cousin's rare devotion, and had repaid it in her own sweet, lavish fashion.

Marion had never told the true reason of her quarrel with Sydney. Truth to say, the young girl still hoped that her cousin would forget the undesirable though fascinating Elliot, and reward Vincent's long and patient love, and, filled with that hope, she had judged it better to keep silent on the matter of the bracelet, knowing that Lilith, generous to a fault, would at once explain the situation, and in so doing set up a barrier for ever between her and the man whom Marion longed to see her marry.

But gradually even Marion saw that Lilith's heart was irrevocably given to her artist lover, and with a sigh, half of sorrow, half of envy of this wonderful love that had worked such wonders in the wilful Lilith, she gave up planning a brilliant future for her cousin, and resigned herself to seeing her "merely happy."

For herself, happiness seemed to have passed from her life, but in its place had come a quite contentment. She had not seen Sydney since the night he had left her in a passion of grief and humiliation. He could never have really loved her, she thought bitterly, or he would not so soon have got over her loss. He was engaged to a brilliant Society beauty, and was spoken of everywhere as "a rising young diplomatist."

And so the years went on, each one bringing to Lilith a surer promise of a happy future; to Marion a fainter echo of a happy past. Old Drew and his wife had long ago resigned themselves to Lilith's whims, and save for an occasional protest from her mother, generally after a more than usually brilliant offer had been refused, no one interfered with her avowed intention of "remaining single for the present."

"Not so long now, dear!" she whispered to her cousin. "Another six months, and he will be here. Think, Marion, what a lot there'll be to hear, to tell!"

"You have a wonderful amount of faith, Lilith; don't be too sure, dear."

"You forget," replied the girl, "he was to write if he failed, or was ill, or unhappy. Only so long as he was doing well there was to be silence on his part, trust on mine. He has not written, and so I know my faith is not misplaced. I'm sure he will be here."

But as the time went on, bringing ever nearer the hour which was to be the realisation of her fondest dreams, or the crushing of her brightest hopes, Lilith

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grew restless; now, utterly despondent; now, supremely confident, she seemed consumed with a fever of uncertainty.

It was with a feeling of relief that she learnt that Vincent had returned to town. Every woman has a kindly feeling for an old lover, but he was the only one for whom she entertained a feeling akin slightly to regret.

Vincent soon fell into his old custom of dropping in to afternoon tea, calling for Lilith for a ride, occasionally accompanying them to the theatre, and the quiet friendliness of his manner, so different from the old passionate adoration, was infinitely comforting. He used to talk of his travels, and generally, in some mysterious fashion the conversation drifted round to Rome.

"I knew a young fellow there," he said, "one of the most marvellous painters I have ever met. He's coming over to London, I believe, this year, and would interest you, I think. Romantic-looking fellow, tall and dark. His name? Oh, rather a peculiar one—Elliot Raeburn."

And then Lilith had smiled in such a radiant fashion that he had started and fell to pondering,

Perhaps it was as a result of his reflections that he devoted himself to Marion for the rest of the evening, and when he left, whispered a request for an interview next day.

"I always believed," he said, "that Sydney Rowth did you a great injustice, and now I am certain. I was pretty intimate with Raeburn in Rome, and was struck by the fact that all his pictures were modelled after your cousin Lilith's face; that, and some other things made me draw my own conclusions. Have I your permission to explain to Rowth?"

"No—never; I would rather die!"

"Don't you care for him still—a little?"

The girl's face flushed. How dare he ask such questions, what right had he?

And he answered, taking her hand in his: "The right of love. I have cared for you ever since that night, my dear, when you fell, pale and helpless as a broken lily, and now I care more than ever. Marion, is there any hope?"

Later Lilith looked in with a strange flush on her face and a new light in her eyes.

"Marion!" she cried, but drew back and closed the door when she saw the picture that confronted her—a picture old as the world but ever new.

A fair young girl, whose quiet loveliness was touched into beauty, leaning against her lover, in whose eyes she read all she wished to know.

Lil turned towards someone in the dusky hall—someone who caught her to him with a sigh.

"I'm but a poor sort of fellow, darling, after all. What am I in comparison with Vincent?"

"The man I love!" she said, and kissed him.

* * * * *

Old Drew and his wife, and the world generally, took very kindly to Raeburn; indeed, it is hard to say whether he or his pictures are the most popular nowadays. Despite success, and all that success brings, however, Raeburn himself is very little changed; careless, light-hearted as ever, perhaps Marion is right, when she declares that, after all, he is still, and always will be, just "a charming scamp."

John K. Prothero.

The Most Severe Winter for Years.

Reports from the Meteorological Office predict that this winter will be the most severe we have had for years. An eminent authority on such matters announces that every four years England is visited with an unusually severe spell of cold weather, and this is the year on which it is due. How to keep warm and avoid colds and chills becomes therefore an important question.

The human body may be said to be heated by a system of "hot pipes." These "pipes" are the arteries and veins through which the hot blood is forced by the heart. When ill-health supervenes the blood becomes poor and thin, and does not carry enough oxygen to thoroughly warm the extremities. Cold hands and feet, a general sensation of chill, and a shrinking from the least draught are symptoms which reveal this condition. On the other hand the heart may be weakened by some ailment, and rendered unable to pump the blood with sufficient force. Palpitation, fluttering sensations at the heart, and fits of faintness are signs of this state.

There is a third common reason for the "warming system" getting out of order. That is the failing appetite. Food is the "fuel" which mends the fire. When the appetite fails the fuel supply is cut off, the heat goes down, colds and chill creep in, and in but too many cases bronchitis, pneumonia, and fatal complications ensue. In Chas. Forde's Bile Beans will be found a strengthening, blood-making, blood-purifying medicine. They strengthen the digestive organs, thus ensuring that all the "fuel" taken in the form of food, is used. They purify the blood, thus preventing it from carrying about waste and detrimental substances. They cure palpitation, fluttering sensations at the heart, and other signs of weakness of this important organ, thus ensuring vigorous heart action and circulation. Indeed, in all departments in which wintry weather tries the system, Bile Beans will be found to give strength. They may be obtained from any chemist for one and three half-pence or two and ninepence, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, E.C., by sending prices. They should be found in every household during the winter months particularly.

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Just the Thing.

MODERN COMPOSER: "I've got a new stage song that's bound to make a hit." Manager: "Any sense in it?" "None at all." "Any fun in it?" "Not a bit." "Any music in it?" "Not a note." "Hooray! It's bound to catch on."

A Saving Revenge.

KNOWIT: "My cook is a treasure." Wantoknow: "You're in better luck than most people, then." Knowit: "I wasn't till lately. You see, she had a row with the grocer, and to revenge herself she is very saving with the groceries. The bill is only half what it used to be."

Rather Mixed.

MR. YOUNGHUSBAND (reading from paper): "Married—Blanche de Smythe to Walter Wellington Jones. What old memories that name awakens!" Mrs. Y. (blushing): "I never imagined you knew of my engagement to Walter." Mr. Y. (chillingly): "I was alluding o Blanche."

A Good Thing, Too.

LITTLE HANS had a picture-book given him on his birthday. Suddenly he came running to his mother, and said: "Mamma, do animals know what they are called?" "No." Hans uttered a sigh of relief, and remarked: "It would have been so unpleasant for the donkey, wouldn't it?"

Cigars as Vegetables.

"I HAVE here," said the father, "a bill of yours, for £47, for cigars. When I agreed to honour all your bills for ordinary necessities——" "They are necessities," came the prompt reply. "Indeed, sir, and how do you make that out?" "Well, my doctor orders me a vegetable diet, and I take it in that form."

Father was Silent.

"GEORGE," said the fond parent, "you took my overcoat instead of your own, and I found the pockets full of cigarettes and matches." "I discovered my mistake, father," replied the son, "directly I got outside, for the pockets of the coat I had on contained chocolate creams and three pairs of ladies' gloves." No more was said!

A Tedious Task.

HE was apprenticed to the grocery trade. One day a customer went in for a bushel of split peas. The master of the shop called the boy and said: "Sydney, just fetch a bushel of split peas from the loft." Sydney was so long gone that his master went to see what he was about. Imagine his surprise when Sydney said, "Please, sir, I shall never be able to split a bushel of them." He had taken a pair of scissors, and was vainly endeavouring to cut some ordinary blue peas in half!

How Nice!

TOMMY: "This is Saturday, and mamma and papa are goin' to the theatre to-night. I'm awfully glad." Mabel: "Why?" "'Cause she can't wash me to-night, an' she'll get up so late to-morrow morning she'll have to let me go dirty, or miss church.'

Not Quite Alone.

THERE was a very small audience present, and it was rapidly dwindling away. On the stage the hero and heroine are holding a rendezvous. Hero to Heroine: "Are we alone?" Heroine (thinking of the audience): "Not yet. There are two fellows near the door who look as if they might be able to sit through another act."

Competition a Good Thing.

IN a country town in Ireland a new post-office was in process of erection, when a poor man came into town to post some letters. On learning the nature of the new building, "Faith," said he, "it's glad I am to hear that same, for not a shop of the kind was there in the town but one, and the thunderin' villains used to charge what they liked for them stamps! But now there'll be someone to compate with them."

Sound Advice.

AN amateur painter, who was repairing his house, told a friend that he had been struck by a bright notion. The ceiling of his library was very dirty, so he purposed to whitewash it and then paint upon it a picture representing Apollo and the nine Mus s. The friend, who had his own views as to the proficiency of the amateur, suggested, as an improvement, that the ceiling should be painted first and whitewashed afterwards.

He Wasn't Chained.

A LONDONER who lately crossed over to Cork asked his Jarvey as to the population and municipal government of that town. On being informed that it was an incorporated city, the chief officer of which was a Mayor, he asked: "And does the Mayor wear the insignia of office?" "Insignia, what's that?" asked the astonished Jarvey. "Why, a chain about his neck," explained the cockney. "Oh, bless you, no," responded the other, "he is perfectly harmless. They let him go about loose."

A Smart Reply.

LAST Christmas Day at a dinner party, an officer of the Dragoon Guards had been placed with his back to the fire. Having stood the heat for some time the officer was obliged to ask for a fire-screen. His host, a pompous old squire, who thought everything belonging to him was perfection, got exceedingly wroth at the fire being complained of, and irefully said: "A British soldier should always be able to stand fire." "Not at his back, sir," was the witty response.

An Act in Two Scenes.

"I HAVE a little surprise for you, Amy," said the enraptured young man half-an-hour after the wedding, in some embarrassment. "Excuse me for a moment." He went out of the room and returned with a stout old lady with a determined expression of countenance. "My dear," he said, "this is my mother. She—er—will live with us, you know." "So glad. And I have a little surprise for you, too, Harry." She left the room, and returned in a moment with five fair-haired little girls, apparently ranging in age from three to thirteen. "These are my little darlings, Harry," she whispered. "Lydia, Minerva, Penelope, Rachel and Mehitabel, kiss the gentleman. He is to be your new papa."

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A woman cannot possibly look plain or unattractive if she uses the famous DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES. She will be as fair as a lily, and wrinkles will not appear until she is far advanced in life. This may seem impossible to you, but it is the plain truth. The Perles are not a cosmetic, remember, but a food for the skin. They make ladies of 40 look to be less than 30. If from any cause you have reason to be ashamed of your face, you should commence taking these famous Perles without delay. They are bound to effect an improvement in your appearance. Thousands of men and women, with unhealthy, blotchy or muddy skins, are grateful for having taken DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES

WHY NOT TRY THEM?—If you would like to test DR. ROSE'S FACE PERLES send three stamps for dainty booklet, "Beauty is Power," and FREE TRIAL BOX, or 2/6 postal order for a large-size box. All boxes sent in plain packages, post free. Address: The Rose Remedy Co. Dept K, St Albans, England.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.—MADGE MORRIS.]

"**Sunflower.**"—Your young lady means nothing in wearing a ring on the second finger of her left hand. It is a mere ornament, and not intended as a hint to you to place one on the third. I cannot advise you on the second question, which must depend on circumstances. However, if the matter is as you say, your fears are justified, and your action must depend on the extent to which you are fond of her.

You ask me, "Peggy Patti," if I advise you to go on the stage. You say you have a good home and a good situation, and yet are not content. Now I know nothing about you, whether you have a talent for acting or no; but of this I am sure, unless you have some influential friend in the theatrical world, who would give you work, and help you along, it would be more than foolish to give up your comfortable home for a mere speculation which would, in all probability, end in smoke.

"**Flora**" is receiving attentions from a young man in a boarding-house. He is something in the City, and has travelled a great deal. Should she encourage him?———You ask my advice in strict confidence about the young man. Don't think me unkind if I am quite candid about him, but I don't quite like your description. I may be wrong, but I seem to know that young man. He is a very regular frequenter of the boarding-house of the kind at which you are staying. He has generally travelled a lot, talks delightfully, knows how to pay a compliment, is free with his money when out with you, and is—something in the City. He may be thoroughly genuine, but I think the majority of young men of the cosmopolitan order are seldom matrimonially inclined, and carry on such flirtations with every pretty girl they meet. Further, just get your brother or somebody you know to make a few inquiries about his position in the City before you let him squeeze your little hand again, and get to know something about his family antecedents before you next turn those pleading grey eyes upwards to his in a glance of half affection, half doubt. I am sure you have pleading grey eyes. Cosmopolitan young men like them, and girls with them very often return the sentiment, often to their own danger.

"**Tom**" is engaged to the best girl in the world, and wants to know what he can give her for a small present; he has only been engaged three weeks, and is too bashful to ask her.———Why not give her a bottle of scent, or a fan, or a pair of nice gloves? It is difficult to advise you, really, there are such a host of things suitable. Try and find out what her tastes are, and you will soon know what to give her.

"**Dolly**" wants to know whether I consider tight-lacing injurious to the health and complexion.——— Most certainly I do, "Dollie," and not to the health and complexion only, for girls who lace tightly are too often bad-tempered in consequence. Surely there is no sight in the world more ugly than a stout woman with a wasp-like waist. I certainly do not recommend you to drink eau de Cologne in order to brighten your eyes at night. It only leads on to the habit of drinking, and that is an evil which every nice-minded girl would shun.

"**Gerty**" has been saying unpleasant things to the neighbours about Rose. The latter wants to know whether she should cut the former, or how she should act.———I should not cut her. Why not ask her to tea one day, and when you are together, hint that you hear somebody has been maligning you. Point out how utterly wrong the suggestion has been, and say you wonder how anyone can have been unkind enough to make such false statements. You in this way convey to your supposed traducer the fact that she has been wrong and unkind, without mentioning any names. The next time you meet, you can bow slightly, and suit your actions entirely according to the behaviour of the other.

"**Lovesick Jack**" says that a young lady calls at his office on business every morning, and that he has fallen madly in love with her; but she does not appear to notice him, though he has an idea she likes him. He wants to know how he can impress her?———What business does she come on? Is it anything that is in your province? If so, you can, perhaps, win her favour by doing her all sorts of little services. Try and manage to always be in attendance on her yourself, and, unless she resents your advances, she will not mind a young man being nice to her. This largely constitutes an acquaintance, and you are entitled to bow to her if you should meet. For the rest, you must, supposing her to be a young lady living with her people, try and get to know her socially. I have often suggested to correspondents how that is to be done. You must find out where she lives, whom she visits, how she spends her time, and manage to meet her somehow or another outside of business. If she really likes you, she will, perhaps, be a party to it.

The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 31—36," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 10th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 31. NUMBER PUZZLE.

What is the number which is made up of one-half, one-quarter, and one-seventh of itself, plus three?

No. 32. ACROSTIC.

The initials of equivalents of the following give the surname of a prominent politician:

A well-known town in France.
The capital town of an English county.
A Chinese town.
The capital town of a Scotch county.
A seaport of England.
One of the English counties.
An English river famous for its salmon.
An English town famous for another kind of fish.

No. 33. WORD DIAMOND.

A consonant, part of a very important verb, something necessary to sustain life, a personal pronoun, a consonant.

No. 34. ARITHMETICAL PUZZLE.

A man went into a shop and said to the owner, "If you will give me as much as I have in my pocket I will spend sixpence with you." The shopkeeper agreed to do this. The man then went into a second shop and said the same words with a similar result. He then entered a third shop and repeated the transaction, but after leaving this shop he had nothing left. How much had he to start with?

No. 35. BEHEADED WORDS.

1. Behead a part of the body and leave a number.
2. Behead the name of a college and leave a drink.
3. Behead to banter and leave a confederate.
4. Behead ajar and leave a writing instrument.
5. Behead in no degree and leave at any time.

The beheaded letters form the name of a famous poet.

No. 36. CHARADE.

I accompany the diver in treacherous depths,
I protect him from the fishes,
I am with the scorcher as he flies along
And bounds o'er hedges and ditches.
I am used in a thousand different ways,
But stay—I'm beginning to brag.
Still you'll find me in all sorts of places,
And in every schoolboy's bag.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 13 to 18.

The most correct list received was that of Mr. C. G. Martin, of 2A Edgington Road, Streatham, S.W. The prize of £1 1s. has therefore been dispatched to him.

Pencil-cases have been sent to the following:

A. Wragg, Edensor, Bakewell, Derbyshire.
Miss M. Dingle, 2 Grosvenor Villas, Bath.
F. G. Horner, Richmond Villa, Anderton Park Road, Moseley, near Birmingham.
Mrs. E. Tracy, 18 Albert Road, Ilford.
A. H. Scales, 51 Hormead Road, Paddington.
Charles Annear, 50 Carroun Road, South Lambeth.
A. F. Cox, 60 Grantham Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.
Mrs. E. Ryan, 21 Abbotts Road, East Ham, E.
Miss V. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.
H. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.
J. J. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.

SOLUTIONS.

13. M ore.
O unce.
R ich.
S poil.
E ating.

14. P late.
S hark.
P ink,
S ample.
F lower.
S hoe.
C lock.
H aunt.

15. Sandwich. Cork. Dublin. Turkey. Greenland. Greece.

16. Madam.

17. "Without a sign, his sword the brave man draws,
And asks no omen but his country's cause."
Greek. Roman. Scandinavian. Britons. Auguries. Birds. Swan. Raven. Hoot. Dreams. Success. Window. Right-hand. Shoes.

18. Victoria. Augusta. Christmas. Victoria. Eye. Augusta. Red. Biarritz. Christmas. Augusta. Gold. Paul. Coral. Horn. Victoria. Rosetta. Orange. Peel. China. Astrakhan. Cashmere.

A Splendid new Serial will be starting next month. Look out for further particulars later.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

RHEUMATISM CURED

BY A REMEDY THAT HAS ENABLED MANY TO ABANDON CRUTCH AND CANE.

Trial Package FREE,

On the theory that "seeing is believing," John A. Smith wants everyone to try his remedy for the **cure of rheumatism** at his expense. For that reason he proposes to distribute **50,000 free sample packages** among all persons sending him their address. Mr. Smith has suffered all the agony and torture from **Rheumatism**, tried all the remedies known, and yet utterly failed to find relief.

At times he was so helpless that he had to take to morphine, and after considerable doctoring he gave up in despair. He began studying into the causes of **rheumatism**; after much experimenting he finally hit upon a combination of drugs which completely cured him. The result was so beneficial to his entire system that he called his new-found remedy "Gloria Tonic." Those of his friends and relatives and neighbours suffering from rheumatism were next cured, and Mr. Smith concluded to offer his remedy to the world. But he found the task a difficult one, as nearly everybody had tried a hundred or more remedies, and they couldn't be made to believe that there was such a thing as a cure for rheumatism. But an old gentleman from Seguin wrote him saying if Mr. Smith would send him a sample he would try it, but as he had suffered forty-one years and wasted a fortune with doctors and advertised remedies, he wouldn't buy anything more until he knew it was worth something. The sample was sent; he purchased more, and the result was astonishing. He was completely cured. This gave Mr. Smith a new idea, and ever since that time he has been sending out free sample packages to all who apply. The result is that he is now the happy possessor of **thousands of testimonials** from people throughout the world who have been both greatly benefited and **entirely cured** by "Gloria Tonic." Prominent physicians had to admit that "**Gloria Tonic**" is a positive success, among them Dr. Quintero, of the University of Venezuela, to whom it was recommended by the United States Consul. In thousands of other instances the result has been the same. It cured many cases which defied Hospitals, Drugs, Electricity, and Medical Skill.

JOHN A. SMITH.

"Gloria Tonic" **cured** Mrs. H. Bester, of Welton, near Daventry, who has suffered for years. Mr. L. Pinkey, 3 Well Lane, Bridlington, a martyr to Rheumatism for 27 years, has been entirely cured through its use. Mr. J. Holden, of 28 Angles Road, Streatham, S.W., is an enthusiast over "Gloria Tonic." A neighbour of Mr. Holden, Mr. J. Crampton, 24 Angles Road, Streatham, S.W., says: "I can recommend 'Gloria Tonic' to all who suffer with Rheumatism, as I am thankful to say that your remedy has **cured me entirely.**"

The following people have also been entirely **cured** through the use of "Gloria Tonic" attested to by testimonials which they have sent me: Mrs. J. Brewer, 59 St. Ann's Rd., Barking, E.; Mr. T. Marsh, 190 Bury New Rd., Whitefield, Lancs.; Mr. J. Metcalf, Hill Gill Farm, Mallerstang, Kirkby Stephen; Mrs. West, The Club, Surbiton; Mr. G. Chennells, 11 Waterend, near Hemel Hempstead; Mrs. G. Hiron, 39 Stanley St., Queen's Rd., S.W.; Mr. E. Guest, Bissell St., Quinton, near Birmingham; Mrs. Sanderson, 22 West Park Rd., Newport, Mon.; Mr. L. Leyshon, 2 Gwindy Terrace, Pentrechwyth; Mrs. W. Smith, Appiehouse, Tronston, Sandwick, Stromness; Mr. J. Helmsley, Hadlow Down, near Uckfield; Mr. P. Haslem, 32 Tanners Terrace, Ramsbottom; Mr. G. Mackay, Embo Dornoch, Sutherlandshire; Mr. J. Little, South Marston, Stretton St. Margaret's, Swindon.

Can I offer you better proofs of the merits of my remedy? These are only a few of **hundreds of testimonials** of recent date which I now hold.

On receipt of a postal card or a letter from you, mentioning this paper, you will receive by return of post, FREE, a trial package of "Gloria Tonic" a booklet on Rheumatism, and other literature of great interest to sufferers. Address—

JOHN A. SMITH, 1007 Montague House, Stonecutter St., London, E.C.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

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GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

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2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS 2½%

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

can safely **Reduce Weight and cure Corpulency permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are small, agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **IMPROVE** both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without Change of Diet. An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

Send 2s. 6d. to **THE TRILENE CO.**, Sole Proprietors **66 Pinsbury Pavement, London.**

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Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 37 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 38 Walnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Cromeley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Coniston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am

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Cures in One Minute

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Attention is particularly requested to the following testimonials selected from some thousands which commands the attention of and a trial by the sufferer.

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"I am pleased to be able to say that I have used your Anti-Neuralgic Water personally, as well as on several of my friends; in every case the effect has been marvellous, at once removing the pain, and I have not heard of any renewal of it.

Wishing you every success, I am, yours faithfully,

F. W. DRAKE."

"Balgreggan, Sandhead, N.B.

"I have tried your excellent 'Anti-Neuralgic Water' and have much pleasure in saying it cured me at once. I have tried it on my friends with the same good result, and I consider it a marvellous remedy.

L. MAITLAND."

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And all STOMACHIC TROUBLES.

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Remove WIND and PAINS in the STOMACH,
Arouse SLUGGISH and TORPID LIVERS,
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STRENGTHEN the STOMACH.

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Remove Pimples and Blotches on the Skin,
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Suitable for OLD and YOUNG.

Purify the BLOOD and remove SCURVY,
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Regulate the System,
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No. 684.) For Week Ending February 8th 1902. (One Penny

SHORT STORIES

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For OCTOBER, 1902.

38,199 Prizes value £15,362

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize, £100 ...	£1	0 0
1	Cash Prize, £75	75	0
1	Cash Prize, £50	50	0
1	Cash Prize, £45 ...	45	0
5	Pianos (Walnut Cases), £40 each	200	0
10	Gents' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Cash Prizes, £10 each ...	100	0
20	Jones's Sewing Machines, £8 each...	160	0
20	Cases Cutlery, £8 each ...	160	0
20	Cash Prizes, £5 each ...	100	0
100	Dinner Services (50 pieces), £2 10s. each...	250	0
100	Gold Filled Gents' Watches, £2 10s. each ...	250	0
100	Ladies' Dressing Bags, £2 5s. each	225	0
100	Handsome Timepieces, £2 5s. each	225	0
100	Cash Prizes, £2 each ...	200	0
300	Ladies' Travelling Trunks, £2 each	600	0
300	Fancy Bed Quilts, £1 10s. each	450	0
1000	pairs Blankets, £1 per pair	1000	0
500	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered, £1 each... ...	500	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- ea.	750	0
1000	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. ea.	750	0
400	½-doz Best Electro-plated Forks, large, 15s. per ½-doz.	300	0
1000	Handsome Meat Carver, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	7	0 0
1000	Ladies' Rolled Gold Bracelets, 15s. each ...	£750	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, small, 14s. per ½-doz.	280	0
1000	pairs of Bed Sheets, 12 6 per pair	625	0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths, 12 6 each	625	0
500	Cash Prizes, 10s. each ...	250	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, large, 8s. per ½-doz.	450	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, small, 8s. per ½-doz.	400	0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses, 2s. each	400	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7s. 6d. each	375	0
1000	Ladies' Serge Dress Lengths, 7s. 6d. each ...	375	0
1000	½-doz. Teaspoons (Best Electro-plated), 5s. per ½-doz.	250	0
4000	Ladies' Chatelaine Bags, 5s. each	1000	0
200	Children's Tea Sets, 3s. 6d. each	35	0
6000	½-doz. Ladies' Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs, 2s. 6d. ½-doz.	750	0
4000	Brushes and Combs, in cases, 2s. each	400	0
4000	Oval Hand Mirrors, 2s. each	400	0
4000	Photo Frames, 2s. each ...	400	0
38,199		£15,362	0

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive wrappers. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest numbers of wrappers of either soap or both of them combined to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than October 31st, 1902. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of the sender, and the number of wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write legibly "**Prize Competition.**" A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. Should any dispute arise as to the contents of any parcel, or any other matter connected with this competition, the decision of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Leeds, to be final. All prizes will be despatched on or before December 20th, 1902.

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BEST AND SAFEST DISINFECTANT. For Use in Kitchen, Laundry, Bathroom, and Nursery. Purifies Everything. Kills Infection. Wards off Illness. Saves Doctors' Bills.

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"EXPRESS" (Regd.) ENGLISH LEVER,

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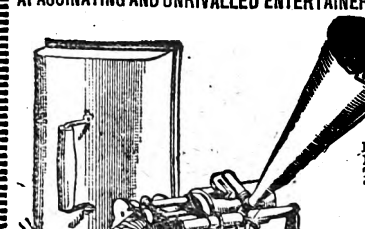

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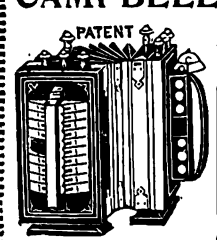

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established 50 Years. BEWARE OF WORTHLESS IMITATIONS

SHORT STORIES

No. 634.] For the Week Ending February 8th, 1902. [One Penny.

The House on the Moor.

By J. Le. Hornibrook.

"Hullo, Eastlake!" called out Lattimer, as he caught sight of me in the wedge at Paddington on Christmas Eve. "Where away?"

A man—an utter stranger—who happened to be brushing past at the moment, turned his head quickly and looked at me in a curious, arrested manner as my name fell on his ears. He hung for an instant irresolutely in the midst of a stride; and then, with another quick, interested glance at me, passed on and was swallowed up in the crowd.

"Who was that?" asked Lattimer, curiously, upon whom the incident had not been lost.

"Haven't the haziest idea," I answered, quite as much in the dark as to the stranger's identity as he was. "Never laid eyes on the man before, to my knowledge."

"Very strange," he ruminated. "He pricked up his ears the instant he heard your name. And there was something odd in his look, too. Depend upon it, there's more in this than meets the eye. Where are you off to?"

"Down Mavistock way. I'm booked for Christmas at Coombe-Leigh."

"The Barringtons?" he said, with a sly, quizzing look.

"Yes," I admitted, well aware that there was one particular member of the family in his mind at the time.

"Well, take care of yourself, old man. I shouldn't be surprised if that unknown friend of yours has his eye upon you, for some reason or other. By the way——"

He stopped short, puckered his brows and stroked his chin in a meditative manner, as if he were chasing some idea through his brain, which, however, managed to elude him.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Oh, it doesn't matter. There was something I wanted to tell you, but it's gone clean out of my head for the moment."

As the empty train for the West backed down to us just then, there was a general scramble for seats, and in the rush I got separated from Lattimer. I was fortunate enough to secure a corner of a smoking carriage; and having stowed away my belongings I leant out of the doorway, looking around for him. I saw him standing at some distance, the same puzzled expression on his face, as if he were still striving to recall what he wanted to say to me. Presently he looked up and caught my eye. With a parting wave of the hand he turned from the spot, and sauntered away.

The train was late in starting, of course, for there were truck-loads of Christmas hampers and parcels of all sorts consigned to the West Country, which took a good deal of handling. Besides, the carriages were packed, and not a few belated passengers were feverishly hunting for seats up to the last moment.

When the guard's whistle sent us off, and the train curved slowly out of the station, I stuck my head out of the carriage window and glanced back along the half-deserted platform. As I did so, I was amazed to see Lattimer dash suddenly into view again, making frantic signals of some kind to me as he raced along with the moving train. Seeing that he could not diminish the distance between us, he pulled up, put his hand to his mouth, and yelled out something; but unfortunately, the shriek of a whistle just then completely drowned his warning shout.

Between one thing and another, I had plenty to occupy my mind during the first hour or so of my journey. I sat with my face to the window, gazing out over the cold, bleak, wintry landscape, and meditating upon the incidents which had occurred previous to my departure. I wondered what Lattimer wanted to convey to me so urgently at the last moment, and if it had anything to do with the appearance of that stranger, whom he seemed to regard with latent suspicion. As I could make nothing out of it, I put the whole thing away from me, and turned to the budget of Christmas numbers which I had brought with me. But still, I could not entirely drag my thoughts back from dwelling on those singular circumstances. A vague consciousness that they foreshadowed some evil in store for me floated hazily through my mind.

At Bristol, where we had a pretty long wait, I made a tour of inspection along the whole length of the train, on the off-chance that the stranger I had seen at Paddington might have come down in it. It was dusk by this time, and though the glow of light in the carriages aided my search, I was unable to pick out anyone in the

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least resembling him. Even among those who were standing on the platform, or hurrying to and fro from the refreshment rooms, I failed to distinguish him.

He put his hand to his mouth and yelled out something.

This being so, I returned to my compartment with the reassuring conviction that I was not shadowed at any rate.

I had to change at Exeter, and on alighting there found that the weather was very different from what it had been in London. It was sharp and piercing enough when I left town; but down here in the West Country, I could see by the watery rim round the gas-lamps at the further end of the platforms, and the marks of wet footprints all over the place, that it was raw, damp, and foggy. There was, in fact, every prospect of a "green" Christmas.

This, however, signified little, since it would have required something more approaching a second deluge to damp the spirit of conviviality at Coombe-Leigh. Christmas there was a thing to remember. None of your modern, half-hearted displays for the sake of the children principally; but a real, genuine, old-English Christmas, with plenty of holly and mistletoe, blazing Yule logs, and beaming faces on every side. I looked forward to meeting the genial and hospitable Sir Brian; big, hearty Jack Barrington, his son and heir; above all, and beyond all, the roguish and bewitching Eva, the youngest of the baronet's three charming daughters.

With such thoughts as these I beguiled the time until the slow train to Mavistock put me down at that station. On the platform I caught sight of the ruddy face and belted figure of Manton, Sir Brian's groom, who had been sent to meet me with the dog-cart.

"You're welcome, sir!" he said, touching his hat, as he took the bag from my hand.

"Thank you, Manton. The train's rather behind-time, I fear."

"It always is, sir, on Christmas Eve. But I've got Master John's mare in the trap, and she'll take us back within the twenty minutes."

It was a good long drive to the baronet's seat, as I knew from experience, but the mare seemed bent upon justifying Manton's opinion of her speed. When we got out on to the lonely country roads, and he let her have her head, she took us along at a spanking pace, the wheels humming like a spinning top.

Fast as we went, however, there were others behind us who went just as fast. Ever since we had cleared the little town, the lights of another trap followed steadily in our wake, keeping close at our heels up hill and down dale. If we swung round a corner, and the bend of the road shut off those lights for a few seconds, they sprang into view again the next moment, like a pair of glaring, watchful eyes, determined to keep us in sight. Looking back through the misty gloom, I could dimly make out the blurred outline of two dark, silent figures seated in the second vehicle.

"Those people behind us, whoever they are, seem bent upon not losing sight of us," I remarked to the groom.

Manton sent a searching look back into the darkness, and appeared puzzled.

"They don't belong to these parts, sir, wherever they come from," he said, evidently rather mystified. "I noticed the trap at the station, and it's a strange one. They've got a smart-looking roan between the shafts; but we'll shake them off presently, for all that."

Just in front of us, the road was lined with trees on either side; and the branches, meeting overhead, formed an inky tunnel through which we had to pass. Manton had to ease the mare here, and proceed with caution, keeping a sharp lookout ahead lest we should meet with any obstruction.

We had got half-way through when I caught the sharp clap, clap of hoofs and whir of wheels close behind us. Glancing round, I found that the strangers had caught up to us, and were evidently about to pass. The light from their lamps showed me that the driver was a tall, burly, sullen-looking individual; but his companion was so muffled up that I could distinguish little of his face or figure.

They drew up close beside us—dangerously close, it seemed to me—while the tall man screwed his head round, and scanned me narrowly behind Manton's back, who was sitting between us. The next second I saw him deliberately pull the roan's head round in our direction; and then came a jarring crash as he dexterously caught the hub of our near wheel. The impact was so sudden and forcible that it very nearly dashed us into the trees at the side; as it was, the mare plunged wildly, and the groom had all he could do to hold her in.

The wanton rascality of the thing made my blood boil; and I half rose from my seat, an angry protest upon my lips. But the stranger, with the coolest insolence, turned the tables by putting the blame upon us.

"Confound you!" he roared to Manton. "What do you mean by pulling across me in that way?"

He leant forward as he spoke, and brought his whip down with a vicious cut across the mare's back. The maddened creature leapt into the air; and then, as the scoundrel in the other trap raised a shout, she jerked her head down with a frightened snort, closed her teeth upon the bit, and away she went at a blind, furious, reckless gallop, that threatened us with destruction every instant.

"Hold on, sir! Hold on tight!" screamed Manton, his face crimson with passion, as he tugged and strained at the reins. "If once—— Oh!"

There was a snap, and the near rein parted in his hands. He made a wild lurch forward to grab the

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broken end as it disappeared over the dash-board, lost his balance, tumbled out on the mare's back, and was pitched off on to the muddy road.

After that, I have a horrified recollection of clinging desperately to the bumping, swaying trap, expecting that every moment would be my last. How long that mad rush continued I cannot say; but, suddenly, there was a swerve—a bump—a crash; and I was shot into the air like a stone from a sling. I reached the ground with a sickening thud, that seemed to jolt every tooth out of my head. And then came darkness—a blank.

* * * * *

In that interval of unconsciousness I must have been picked up and transported to a distance; for when I opened my eyes again I found myself in new and totally strange surroundings. Through the swimming mist which blurred my vision, I could dimly distinguish a round ball of white light within a few yards of me; and that was practically all at first.

As my brain cleared, however, I saw that this ball of light represented a lamp, with an opalescent globe, placed at some little distance from me. My gaze travelled slowly round, and I became aware that I was lying on a couch in a large, square-shaped room; the ceiling being so low that, to my distorted fancy, it seemed to be descending slowly to crush me; and I experienced that horrible, overpowering sensation, such as is produced by a nightmare, in looking up at it.

To escape this disagreeable illusion, I turned my head round towards the lamp again. It stood on a circular table, placed in the very centre of the floor, and which looked like a small island set in the expanse of faded green carpet. Whatever other furniture the room could boast of was moved back against the wall, where I could distinguish little of it.

There was something more than all this, however. Lying open on the floor within a few paces of me, the contents exposed to view, was my portmanteau, which, judging by the way my linen was tossed about, had evidently been thoroughly overhauled. I was so weak that I could not drag myself to it, even if I wanted to. Though, by moving my limbs, I had ascertained that no bones were broken—luckily, I had come down upon soft, sodden ground—I was terribly bruised and shaken by that headlong flight through the air.

When I had taken in my surroundings, I began to consider—vaguely enough at first—where I was, and for what purpose I had been brought here. But, presently, as my mind took a firmer grip of the situation, and every detail of this disastrous journey came vividly back to me, a vague, nameless dread stole upon me. The strangeness of the place, the unknown dangers which threatened me; above all, the ghostly silence that reigned around, filled me with the most ominous forebodings.

I was striving to drag myself from the couch, with some feverish notion of endeavouring to make my escape while I was yet alone, when a door at the other end of the room opened, and two men made their appearance. In the foremost I recognised the tall ruffian who had been directly responsible for the disaster to our dog-cart; the other was the selfsame stranger whom I had last seen on the crowded platform at Paddington!

Neither of the two displayed any immediate concern about me. They did not even bestow a glance in my direction. Standing over near the door, they whispered together for a few moments, but in so low a tone that I was unable to catch even the drift of their conversation. With my senses keenly, almost painfully, on the alert, I lay there and watched them.

Presently the tall man—from what I heard afterwards I have reason to suppose his name was Bradley—crossed the room, and looked down at me with the calm and deliberate observation of one who was summing up the injuries sustained by a horse or a hound. Now that they had me in their power, as helpless, for the moment, as if I was bound hand and foot, the brazen ruffianism which he had exhibited on the road was laid aside, and he appeared disposed to treat me with some show of consideration. But still, as my eye rested upon his great, hulking figure, his huge, red hands, and bare, sinewy wrists, I felt utterly weighed down and overpowered. There was something about the man which told me that, if he were put to it, he would have strangled me as I lay there, without any great compunction.

"Not so much damage, after all, I see," was his comment, when he had run his eye over me. "No bones broken, eh?"

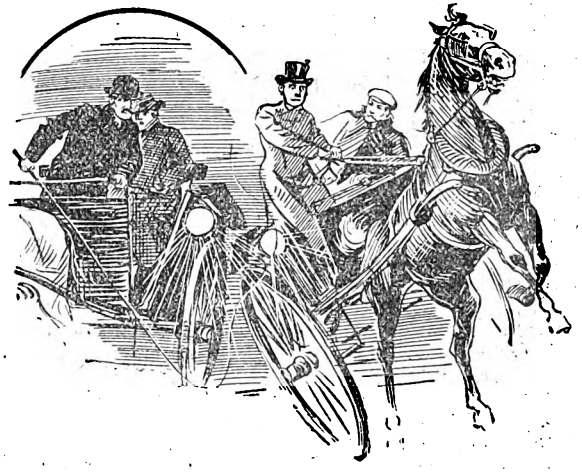
"No," I admitted.

He turned away with a sort of satisfied grunt, and my gaze followed him as he went towards a small side-board, from which he came back with a decanter of brandy and a glass in his hands. He poured a medium quantity of the spirit into the glass, and held it out to me. I hesitated, looking at him doubtfully, for I was not at all sure that the liquor was not drugged.

"Pshaw, man!" he said, evidently divining my suspicions, and tossed it off himself.

Satisfied with the test, I was glad to avail myself of the stimulant, and it seemed to put new life into me. Taking the glass from me again, Bradley retired into the background, leaving me an interrupted view of the second man, to whom I now devoted my whole attention.

He was seated at the table, engaged at the moment in jotting down something with a fountain pen, the tails of his long, loose overcoat trailing on the ground. As he sat there in the strong light of the lamp, his sharp, clean-cut profile turned towards me, I studied him narrowly. It required no prolonged examination, however, to convince me that he was a man of a very



The maddened creature leapt into the air.

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different stamp to his big, blustering colleague; and, moreover, far more to be feared. I had not a doubt that he was the instigator of this rascally business, and the prime mover in it.

"There are a few questions which we shall have to

"Not so much damage, after all, I see," was his comment.

put to you, Mr. Eastlake," he said, without suspending his work, and speaking in a hard, metallic voice, that had something grating in it. "Perhaps you will be good enough to answer them."

"That depends," I returned.

The pen stopped; and his eyes came round in my direction with a look which it was not at all pleasant to behold.

"It might be well, before we proceed further, that you should realise your precise position at the moment," he remarked, coldly. "Might I ask if you have any idea as to where you are?"

"I have not," I replied.

"Then I will venture to enlighten you. This house stands out on the moors, away from every other habitation, and even from the public roads. There is not, I may safely say, a building of any sort within a mile of it. Across that belt of moorland your voice would have to travel in order to reach a human ear, if you impose upon us the necessity of enforcing your compliance. And as my friend here will tell you," he added, indicating the tall, ominous figure in the background, "there are deep and ugly pits on these same moors, which have a knack of keeping any secret intrusted to them."

He paused; and as I pictured this lonely house, set in a desolate expanse of moor, I confess that I shuddered. To be held a prisoner here, in the custody of two such men, robbed me of the last lingering hope of escape or rescue, and I realised how utterly and completely I was at their mercy.

"Now that I have made the situation plain to you," proceeded the stranger, in the same hard, matter-of-fact tone, "you will probably recognise the futility of any opposition on your part. The questions which I shall put to you need not alarm you, however; they are merely intended to clear the way. To begin with, you are, I understand, an official of the Home Office?"

"I am."

"You are acquainted with the Minister who is at the head of that Department, I suppose?"

"I am."

"Are you brought into personal contact with him?"

"Daily."

"In what capacity?"

"As his private secretary."

I caught a gleam of triumph on the keen face before me.

"Then, Mr. Eastlake," he declared, "you are the very man we want."

The announcement fell on me like a blow; and my heart sank under it. It was very evident that these men had some desperate move in view, in which I was to play an important part, whether I liked it or not. It grew on me that I was in the hands of a couple of dangerous criminals, and that my life depended upon implicit compliance with their demands.

"Might I ask," I said, wishing to know the worst at once, "what it is you require of me?"

"The matter is this," replied the other, leaning forward, and tapping his long fore-finger with the fountain-pen. "There is at the present moment a man confined in Dartmoor Convict Prison, undergoing a life sentence. It is vitally essential that I should obtain access to him; and not only so, but that he should regain his liberty, even if he is eventually captured again. There are interests at stake, the importance of which I cannot exaggerate, and which render his presence absolutely imperative, if only for one hour. More than this I need not say. I may tell you, however, that I have a plan for getting him out; and to-morrow being Christmas Day, will be the most suitable one for my purpose. Most of the warders will have gone out on leave; so that, in case of pursuit, the chances will be more in our favour. Besides, at such a time, discipline is likely to be a trifle lax.

"The first and main difficulty is to gain admittance to the prison. There are, as you may readily suppose, certain reasons which stand in the way of my obtaining an order from the Home Office. Apart from that, it is necessary that it should be of such a stringent nature as to override all formalities and technical objections. It is in this respect that I require your assistance."

"In what way?" I asked.

"I have here," he said, turning to the table, "some of your official paper, with which I took the precaution of providing myself. You are, I have no doubt, perfectly well acquainted with the signature of the Home Secretary; probably you may happen to have a specimen of it by you at the moment. You will write an order such as I require, and sign it with his name; taking care to word it so that no quibble of any kind can be raised. You will also give me a covering letter from yourself, as his private secretary, impressing upon the officials the importance of this order, and desiring them to facilitate my interview with the prisoner. That, briefly, is what I must call upon you to do."

"And if I refuse?" I said.

"If you refuse," he returned, in a perfectly even and level tone, "I can only assure you that you will find a resting-place at the bottom of one of those deep pits out there."

He was silent; and, though, as yet, my mind failed to take in the full significance of this daring scheme, I was keenly alive to the extreme and pressing danger of my position. For the present my sole desire was to gain time, so that I might think the whole matter over quietly, and if possible discover some loophole for escape.

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"Even if I were willing to comply with your demands," I said, "you can see for yourself that I am not in a fit condition to put pen to paper just now. The very shakiness of my handwriting would betray you to the officials."

"That is only reasonable," he replied. "It will be time enough in the morning; and, I daresay, a night's rest on that couch will help to steady your nerves. Only," he added, impressively, taking my consent for granted, "let me urge upon you the necessity of exercising the utmost care when you sit down to write that order. There must be no flaw, either in the document itself, or in the signature. If anything should go wrong, and I am not back in this house to-morrow evening, my friend here will deal with you in the manner I have already pointed out."

He rose as he spoke, gathered up his papers, and withdrew from the room. Bradley followed him, locking the door as he passed through, and I was left to my own uncomfortable and very disquieting reflections.

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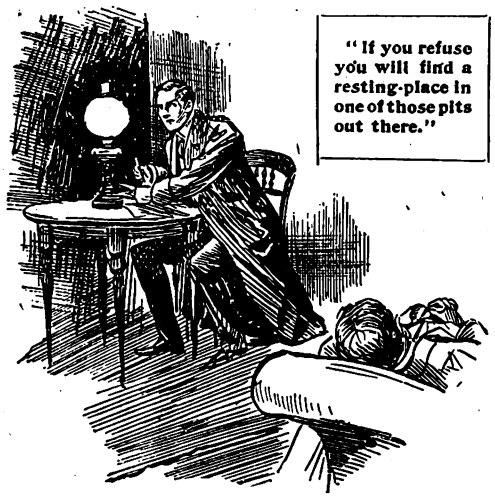
In about an hour's time, Bradley invaded my seclusion again, bringing something in the shape of a rough and ready supper on a tray. Though I felt equal to moving about a little now, I begged him to wheel the table over to the couch, for I thought it just as well he should rest under the impression that I was still too weak to rise.

When he had gone, and I was free from observation, I sat up and turned my attention to the supper tray. The fare, homely as it was, proved none the less acceptable. I made a good hearty meal, considering all things; and then, feeling decidedly better, proceeded to examine the room with stealthy, cat-like tread.

The result of my inspection threw me back upon my difficulties again. Both the windows were heavily barred on the outside, and all hope of escape by the door was out of the question. I returned to the couch, satisfied that there was nothing for it but to wait the issue of events.

Shortly after eleven o'clock, Bradley made his appearance for the last time that night. He brought in a couple of coarse rugs under his arm, which he flung down on me as if I were nothing more than a log. Then he turned and picked up the tray.



"If you refuse you will find a resting-place in one of those pits out there."

"You will leave me the lamp, I suppose?" I ventured to ask.

"Um—yes," he said, though he looked at it doubtfully for a moment or two. As he retired, I heard him lock the door and take away the key. A little later his heavy step sounded overhead; and as I had seen the other man pass through the hall on his way upstairs when Bradley last entered the room, I felt assured that I was now the sole occupant of the ground floor.

Away we went, across the bleak, brown moor in this race of life and death.

Left alone for the night, I turned the lamp down, tucked the rugs round me, and set myself to look the situation straight in the face. It was unquestionably an ugly and embarrassing one. On the one hand, I was asked to forge an official order, and for the purpose of setting free a criminal, who, for all I knew, might make use of his liberty to commit some murderous outrage, by way of revenge or otherwise. On the other, if I stood out, there was the certainty of my being dragged from this house in the early morning—gagged and bound, most likely—and flung to the bottom of one of those deep, slimy Dartmoor pits, which have been the scene of many a dark and secret tragedy. Those were the two alternatives which confronted me; and I saw no middle course, no possible way of escape.

I cannot say that I came to any definite decision, then and there; I still grappled with the problem, hoping that I might yet hit upon some means of frustrating the designs of these men, without drawing their vengeance down upon me. But at the back of my mind there was a fixed and unalterable resolve that no pressure they could bring to bear would induce me to comply with their demands. At the last moment, even when death stared me in the face, something might crop up to turn the tide in my favour.

It was not until the night was far advanced, and I had spent long and harassing hours in racking my brains without avail, that hope began to slip gradually away from me, like a rope from a drowning man.

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Unable to bear up any longer, I sank into the depths of gloomy despondency. The dead, boding silence; the consciousness that I was absolutely cut off from the outer world; above all, the knowledge of what awaited me in the morning, sent my heart down as if weighted

There on the doorstep stood Eva herself.

with lead. At last, worn out by that protracted and anxious vigil, I fell into a broken, fitful slumber.

When I awoke, and all the dark forebodings which had haunted me throughout the night came crowding back, the lamp was still burning dimly. My watch showed me that it wanted but a few minutes to five o'clock. I reckoned that those men upstairs would not be stirring for another hour or two, so that a brief respite remained to me. The time was short, yet—— Great Heavens! I had it!

As I lay there on the couch, staring at the lamp with dismal concentration, a thought came to me, which was almost like the flash of an inspiration. In an instant, palpitating with feverish eagerness, I was on my feet, for there was not a moment to lose. Fumbling for my matches, I lit a candle which I found on the mantel piece, and then turned to the lamp again. For in the lamp lay my one and only chance of escape!

With a puff, I extinguished the flame, removed the globe and chimney, and proceeded to screw off the top. Thank Heaven! There was a small quantity of oil still left. Taking hold of the shank, I tiptoed softly across the room, and saturated the door with paraffin, especially in the neighbourhood of the lock. Then I struck another match.

Pop! It was the sudden burst of flame as the oil caught fire. I stood back, watching, with breathless, concentrated intentness, those fiery tongues as they licked their way up the wood, like so many willing agents, eager to effect my deliverance. I knew it was a conflict between them and time, and was kept in the throes of agitated suspense.

For a few anxious moments I doubted whether the fire would take hold, but I soon saw from the charred appearance of the wood that it had got its grip. Still, it made slow progress at first; and I was on thorns lest the smoke or smell of burning paraffin should arouse the men upstairs. Every second I expected to be startled by a thump and rush overhead, and hear Bradley thundering down to intercept my escape.

It seemed to me hours before the fire had eaten away the wood round the lock; but at last, as I drove my foot against it, the socket fell out, and the blazing door yawned open of its own accord. Another moment and I was in the hall; clawing, with trembling fingers, at the bolts and chain of the front door.

Oh, Heavens! what a thrill went through me when this last obstacle was overcome, and the raw, cold Dartmoor air, free and invigorating, struck upon my bare brow! Without an instant's delay I pattered down the neglected strip of garden, slipped through the little wicket at the end, and sped away across the moors.

It was still dark, though there was a cold, greyish glimmer in the sky, which enabled me to steer clear of obstacles in my path, and maintain my headlong flight. I had only got to a short distance, however, when a shout—or rather a regular bellow of rage—came across to me from the house. My head went round over my shoulder as I ran; and there, standing at the door in his shirt-sleeves, was Bradley, menacing me with his huge, extended fist. For a second, the face of the other man showed up behind him, but he darted back instantly into the house; while Bradley, half-dressed as he was, set off after me like some raging beast that had its quarry in view.

Away we went, across the bleak, brown moor, in this race of life and death. From the first I recognised, with a sinking heart, that the chances were dead against me. Weakened by all I had passed through, I was no match in point of speed for my vigorous pursuer. Soon—all too soon—I heard his hard, wicked pants in the darkness behind me; and could tell even without turning my head, that he was gaining on me at every stride. Bracing myself for one last, desperate effort, I struggled on blindly, recklessly, dreading to feel the ruffian's detaining clutch on my shoulder at any moment. And then—Oh, horror!—just as I thought there was still some feeble chance of shaking him off, a dark figure seemed to rise out of the ground straight in front, and bore swiftly down upon me. With a choking cry I gave in; my leaden arms dropped to my sides, and I stopped short on the spot.

But, instead of making for me, the man, whoever he was, went by like a flash. A moment or two later I heard the thud of a blow in the rear, a savage oath, and a snarl like that of a fierce brute brought to bay. The next second they were at it, tooth and nail, those two men; while I, weak and spent, flopped down on the damp soil, and sat there gasping for breath.

The fight which was going on in the dimness near me was fierce enough while it continued, as the state of the ground amply testified when I came to examine it afterwards. But it did not last long. Looking round, I saw that one of the men was already down, and from the patch of white shirt I knew that it was Bradley. The stranger, digging his knees into the ruffian's chest, and gripping him by the throat with one hand, raised the other to his lips and sent forth a shrill whistle.

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In answer to the signal, two or three men came running across the moor from different directions, and between them they soon had Bradley securely bound. The conqueror then rose up, and came over to the spot where I sat. Looking up at him as he approached, something in his tall, athletic figure struck me as familiar, and the next second I had recognised him.

"Barrington!" I exclaimed, joyfully; for it was none other than my big friend Jack himself.

"So we've got you at last, old fellow!" he cried. "We've been out on the moors all night hunting for you. Come, let me give you a hand up. Now, what the dickens does all this mean?"

"It's too long a story to tell you just now," I said. "But how did you get on my track?"

"Manton staggered home last night, a pretty sight! He was bleeding, coated with mud from head to foot, and seemed to be half-dazed. With some difficulty we got out of him a confused account of what had happened. We set off for the scene, a lot of us, found that the mare had dashed into a hedge, splintered one of her forelegs, and smashed the trap to atoms. You, my dear fellow, must have been shot out into the adjoining field, but we could find no trace of you. We organised a search party on the spot, and very luckily came in this direction towards morning. Hullo! what's that?"

"What?" I asked, looking round.

"That blaze over yonder."

"It's the house!" I cried. "The house where I was a prisoner! They shut me up in one of the lower rooms, and to get out I had to burn down the door. The fire has evidently spread."

"I'll have a look," said Barrington, quickly. "You wait here till I get back."

Calling to one of the men who were guarding Bradley, they started off together at a run, making straight across towards the burning building. They soon returned, however, to say that the house was doomed. Nor could they discover a soul about the place. The second man had evidently slipped away; probably having pressed into service the smart roan which Bradley had driven on the previous evening.

As there was nothing further to detain us, Barrington gave directions regarding the prisoner; and then, slipping his arm through mine, led me away. Somewhere about eight o'clock on that Christmas morning we approached Coombe-Leigh; and there, on the doorstep, stood Eva herself, very much relieved, apparently, to see me turn up at last, and showing evident traces of an anxious and sleepless night. I fear that I am open to the charge of having traded on her sympathy; for whereas the little rogue had hitherto backed out of naming the day, I found her more amenable to my intreaties on the present occasion, and this important date was definitely fixed before my visit came to an end.

It was not until I had returned to town that I learnt what Lattimer wished to convey to me as the train was steaming off. It seems he had heard, in a roundabout way, that some stranger had been making inquiries regarding me, especially with a view to ascertaining my probable movements about Christmas time. He remembered this just as he was leaving the station, and rushed back to try and put me on my guard; being convinced that the man we noticed on the platform was the very individual in question.

If only his memory had been a little more retentive!

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PART II. READY FEBRUARY 14.

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The Little Green Badge.

To any man who chances to be enslaved by the wiles of a coquette, I would offer the following advice:

Never permit her to guess that you are jealous, and, above all, do not tax her with fickleness.

Perhaps Harry Mallory had never received this sage warning, or else disregarded it, for he made the stupendous mistake of upbraiding his *fiancée* for heartlessness.

Standing before her with stern brows he said, dictatorially:

"Your manner indicates that you care no more for me than for a dozen other men. Gad! You distribute your favours most generously."

The girl looked up with a saucy flash of her sea-blue eyes.

"There is safety in numbers," she said lightly.

"Both safety and peril," he answered.

"Do sit down," she urged. "You look most uncomfortable standing in that rigid attitude." She was lounging on a divan among a nest of gorgeous cushions.

"Doris," the man said sternly, "trifle no longer. If you wish to break with me, let it be done."

The commanding tone would have roused the girl's anger had not the note of pain in his voice touched her woman's heart.

"What a silly boy!" she laughed, leaning forward and catching at one of his hands. "Tell me this, wise dictator, if I do not prefer you to all other men why am I betrothed to you?"

"You only know," he said bitterly. "I cannot understand it."

"I wouldn't be, had I known you possessed a jealous nature," she said, relinquishing his captive hand, and sinking back among the cushions.

"I am not jealous," he protested.

"Oh! What then?"

"I simply desire to understand your position towards me, which is becoming somewhat uncertain."

The girl clasped her hands behind her head and leaning back farther still, smiled broadly up in his face.

Harry trembled with impotent rage and love.

"You are absolutely heartless!" he cried.

"Then it is you who have deceived me," she answered sweetly, "for you said *your* heart was mine."

"But your own—" he stammered, feeling worsted in the skirmish, "I meant——"

"Oh, that was given into your keeping long ago!" cheerfully.

Harry capitulated. He sank down on the rug at her feet and buried his dark head in her billowy gown.

"Ha, ha! you surrender," she laughed, and stroked his hair. "Listen, dear," seriously. "You must have confidence in me or we shall be most unhappy. Now I have no desire to wound you, yet it seems I do so unwittingly. If you could only convey to me in some way that my actions were displeasing to you I might immediately cease whatever I chanced to be engaged in at the time. For instance, if I were dancing with Dan Clement, whose step suits mine so perfectly, and I caught your signal, I would immediately desert him. If I were playing an accompaniment for the new tenor, who sings so divinely, I would leave the piano, or, if I chanced to be singing myself, I would instantly close my mouth like a bivalve."

"Don't be absurd," Harry said, in a smothered voice.

"But I really wish to please you. I have no interest in other men, yet neither do I feel an aversion towards them since my betrothal to you. See here!" with a sudden idea.

Taking from the paraphernalia depending from her girdle a tiny knife, she unlaced a narrow green ribbon from its network on one of the cushions, and severed a small portion. This she tied in a bow, and raised her lover's face that he might view it. "Now you take this little badge which shall be a sign of jealousy, and whenever I am making you unhappy by my behaviour, attach it to your coat. This will admonish me to relinquish whatever amusement I may be engaged in at the time."

"What nonsense is this?" Harry inquired.

"I am quite serious. At any time that you display this little badge I promise to at once desist from my diversion of the moment."

"But I am never jealous," Harry insisted, flushing.

"Then you need never use it. But take it—put it in your waistcoat pocket, and if I ever should chance to make you jealous, pin it on your coat, and I will see it and end your discomfiture immediately. I will bend this little pin and catch it so it will be ready to hook on. Now put it in your pocket, and let us go on to the Mostyns'. They will think we are spooning on the way."

Two hours later Harry was again disturbed by observing his *fiancée* seated in a cosy corner with Jack Arden,

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a lady-killer, and apparently drinking in with delight all his dulcet flatteries. Jack ground his teeth and soliloquised.

"How can she permit him to gaze into her eyes like that? What can she find to laugh at in his gabble?

"Why does she clasp her hands round her knees in that coquettish manner? The cad is looking down at her slippers. I believe she dropped her handkerchief purposely. The impudence of him to inhale the odour of it as he picks it up!

"Great Heavens! Now he is holding her hand under pretence of palmistry. This is too much. Gad, I can't stand that! Why is she glancing at me? I thought she had forgotten my existence. Ha! She is looking for the little green badge. No wonder she thought it might be forthcoming. But no, missy, I am not jealous. You are making a fool of yourself—that's all.

"I'll walk off to the other room and watch the billiards. Perhaps that will bring her to her senses.

"I wonder what they are doing now? I may as well go leisurely back and glance that way.

"Jove! That looks well for an engaged girl—heads almost touching! They never missed me. What's he doing—mooning over her hand yet? Perhaps he is holding both by this time. Gad! if he isn't pretending to compare them! Every one has strayed away and left them quite alone. I've a great mind to take him by the nape of the neck and drop him over the bannister. I could easily do it—I'm three times his size. How the light glints on her yellow hair from the lamp over their heads!

"Ah! he has noticed it and is flattering her about it. What? Is the fellow going to touch it? No, she has drawn her head back out of his reach. I should hope so! She is looking for the badge again. I trust she is satisfied by this time that she can't make me jealous. If that fellow hasn't the nerve of a Napoleon. I believe he is trying to hypnotise her, else why does he lean forward in that engrossing manner, gazing into her eyes? Gad! It's time that tom-foolery came to an end. Where's that little green fol-de-rol? Anything to cook your goose, Jack Arden! Ha! she sees it—she has left him—but she isn't coming this way. I'll take it off. Now Dan Clement has secured her for a waltz. That will last as long as the music holds out. Dan looks idiotically enraptured. I'll soon stop his fun.

"Ahem! I thought so. She has excused herself. But she is no sooner out of the clutches of one than another man monopolises her. That insufferable tenor is dragging her to the piano that he may warble love-songs to her. When he gets fairly under way I'll cut him off short. Ha, ha! There's some amusement in wearing this little green bow after all. Next! What now? She's coming towards me."

"I would like to go now, Harry, if you don't mind."

"Certainly," he replied, in fiendish glee. "I am quite ready."

When they were in the carriage she spoke again.

"So you found use for the little green badge, after all?"

"Yes, I rather amused myself with it."

"You have a very queer expression on your face when you are amused! I have discovered to-night that you object to my conversing, dancing, or accompanying a singer on the piano. I should say that as your wife I should have rather a dull time. Harry, I have decided that I cannot marry a jealous man."

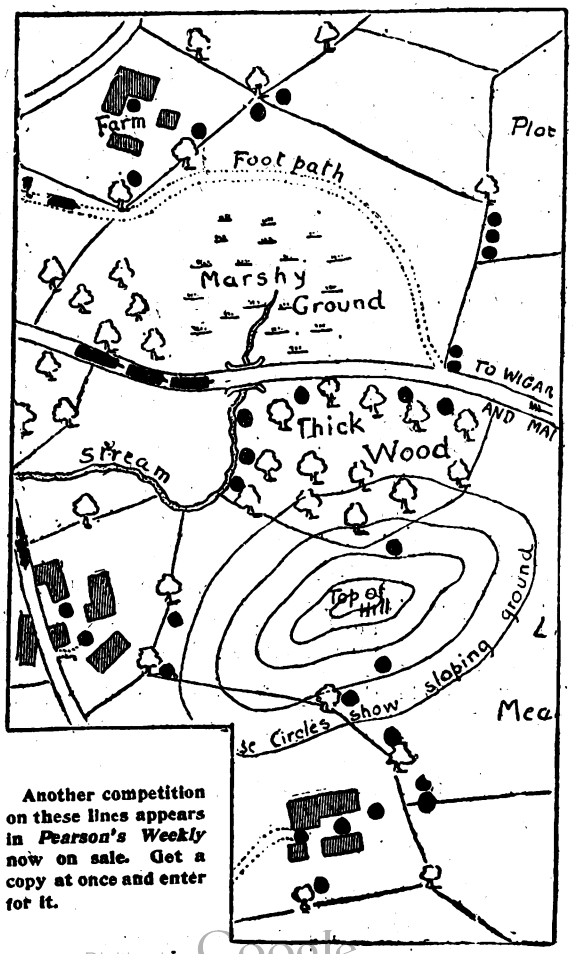
So Doris married a man who wasn't jealous, and now she has discovered, too late, that an unjealous lover often makes an indifferent husband. Landis Ayr.

Result of First "Pearson's Weekly" Sharpshooters' Competition.

The first prize of £10 has been awarded to Mr. L. Jekyll Duff, 1 Colville Square, Bayswater, W., who placed his thirty men in the best positions. The Columbia Graphophone has been awarded to Major R. Beatty, The County Club, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland, and £1 each has been sent to the following: Mr. W. B. Scandrett, 2 Temple Street, Llandrindod Wells; Mr. J. White, 10 Gledhow Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds; Mr. P. F. Brian, 49 Old Clare Street, Limerick, Ireland; Mr. F. Fisk, 88 Folds Road, Bolton, Lancashire; Mr. H. Osborne, Dulce Domum, Clive Avenue, Hastings.

The above awards have been made in accordance with the key map published below, and prepared by Major Arthur Griffiths, whose reasons for placing the men (represented by black spots) are given here:

The problem "bars" the top of the hill, but the lower slopes should be held by riflemen under cover. The enemy has got so far along the Wigan-Manchester road that it is essential he should be met by a sharp fire directly his column crosses the stream on the road. He would believe then that the front was held in force, and seek to deploy to right and left across the open. His left is complicated by the march; so he would seek rather to open out on the right, and this necessitates the occupation of the villages and the ground on that side.



Another competition on these lines appears in *Pearson's Weekly* now on sale. Get a copy at once and enter for it.

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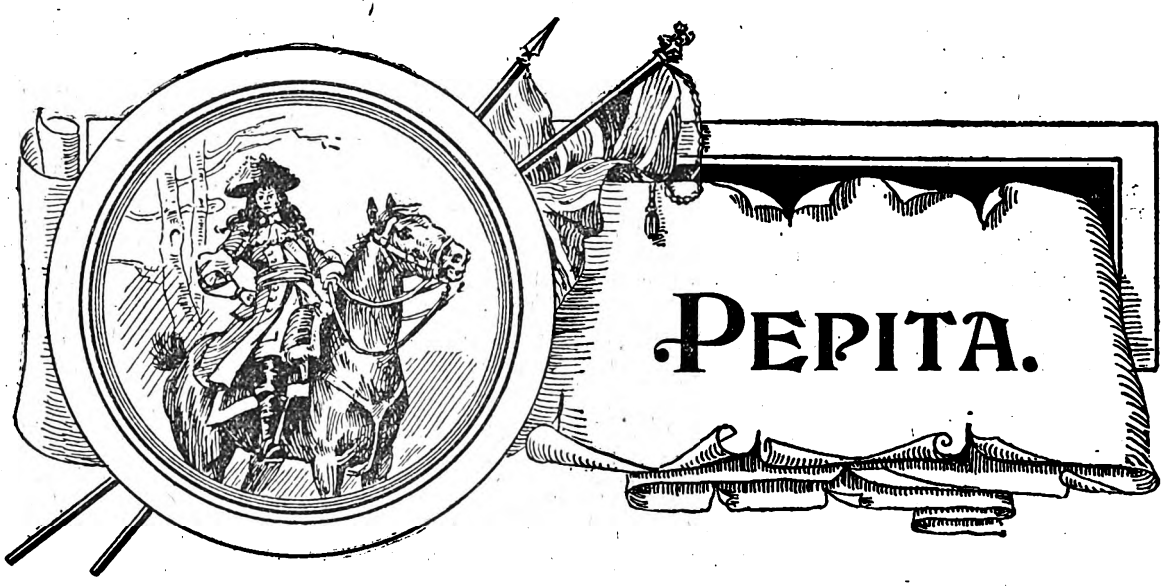

PEPITA.

THERE were two letters awaiting Harrison when he came home that evening; one an official-looking affair in a long envelope with a type-written address, and the other in a blue-tinted covering with a dainty superscription.

He had had many letters before that looked just as these did, and smiled as a man will when he receives one from his sweetheart and his best friend at the same time.

He opened his friend's letter first and read it standing, holding the blue one between his fingers meanwhile. The letter he was reading was long, and he stopped once or twice and looked at the blue envelope and then went on again.

The type-written epistle was from Burnham, who had been his great chum at college, and who was now putting his collegiate training into practice in building a dam at a little town called Santilla, in Mexico. The two friends had corresponded at regular intervals ever since leaving college, and in this last letter Burnham was trying to induce Harrison to come out to Mexico and join him.

Harrison smiled as he read the last sheet, and laid the letter down without returning it to its envelope, then opened the missive from his *fiancee* to find that she no longer considered herself as such. The letter was nothing if not short and to the point.

> "You have grossly deceived me, and you may consider our engagement—in fact, our acquaintanceship—at an end. Do not be so presumptuous as to try and see me; I shall not be at home to *you* at any time."

The "you" in the last clause was underscored, and the note simply signed with an initial.

Harrison was dumfounded, and stood for a moment holding the blue paper loosely between his fingers.

He realised in a swift retrospect of his past life that it was about as murky as that of most men of his class, although since his engagement he had given up that sort of thing. Still, he could think of no special act of his that could possibly have come to her notice and prejudice her against him, and the letter he had just received angered him.

Moreover, he resented her forbidding him to call and explain matters. He reflected, as he walked up and down the room with his hands in his pockets and his forehead wrinkled perplexedly, that she flattered herself when she thought he would attempt to see her after a dismissal of this kind.

The more he thought of it the greater was his desire to shake off the whole business, to go away somewhere, and his eyes happening on the other letter lying beside the long yellow envelope, the invitation contained in its pages seemed as welcome now as it had been out of the question five minutes before.

Three weeks later found Harrison at Santilla, where he was comfortably housed with Burnham in an old adobe house owned by a Mexican named Pedro Sanchez.

Burnham had lived here nearly a year, in fact, it was about the only house in the village that was suitable.

Pedro's family consisted of his daughter, Pepita, and himself, the former attending to the household duties, and the latter gaining a livelihood by any means whatsoever, so long as he did not have to work.

At first sight Harrison sized up the old Mexican for the disreputable old thief that he was, which conjecture was afterwards confirmed by Burnham, and his next thought was one of wonder that Pepita could come of such blood.

She was sixteen and superb, with straight, lithe form, fully developed, though so young, glossy black hair and glorious black eyes—eyes that are found most often under a tropical sun, and that made Harrison forget to release her hand, which he had shaken in the English fashion, as he looked into them.

He decided on the spot that he was going to like Pepita, which was not so strange, as she was the redeeming feature of the bad impression he had got of Santilla at first sight, which reminded him of the Italian quarter of his own city, only it was worse.

There were two other men from England associated with Burnham in the work on the dam, but they lodged with the station agent at Concho and rode over and back each day on their bronchos. Harrison wondered why Burnham did not follow their example instead of living in an old adobe house with two Mexicans. At first he was inclined to suspect him—Pepita was so

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beautiful—but put the thought from him at once, knowing his friend as he did.

Besides, he had no reason to suspect Pepita of being anything but a good woman, although almost too attractive.

He began to like his new life as he became more accustomed to it, and although thoughts of a woman away at home came to trouble him sometimes he found it more and more easy day by day, as the tropical sun got into his blood, to forget.

Each evening, after the work on the dam was over and they had eaten supper, the three men were wont to play cards, set-back usually, although occasionally they indulged in a mild game of draw-poker, with five cent limit. In the latter even old Pedro used to warm up more than was customary.

Pepita usually watched them, sitting on a straight chair with her chin in her hands and her elbows resting on the table. Her usual position had been at the end of the table opposite Burnham, but after Harrison came she sat at the corner next to her father, where she could look into Harrison's face as they played.

Oftentimes, on looking up waiting for a play, he found her black eyes on him, and would smile at her.

He noticed, also, that Burnham, when not engaged in play, looked steadfastly at Pepita, and he wondered.

On coming to Santilla, he told Burnham frankly his reason for leaving home, knowing him to be worthy of the confidence.

As the days went by, somehow he could not help but think that Burnham was more interested in Pepita than he would care to admit, and, on the other hand, from the way she looked at him across the card table each night, he was egostistical enough to believe that the girl was beginning to care for him. It tickled his vanity to think that she should prefer him to Burnham, although he told himself emphatically that he would give her no encouragement to do so.

One afternoon, however, matters came to a crisis between the two, quite unexpectedly to him, if not to her.

Burnham sent Harrison over to the house for some papers, and the latter on arriving at the house found Pepita standing in the doorway, and as he dismounted asked her where her father was.

"Gone over to Concho," she answered, placing her hands against the sides of the doorway.

Harrison made a movement as if to enter, but Pepita still held her hands in the same position without moving.

"Won't you let me come in?" he asked.

The light of coquetry was dancing in her eyes as she looked at him, and her lips were half parted in a smile.

"The señor is so strong—I could not stop him," she replied, yet did not move.

Harrison came up close to her, smiling. He knew she wished him to make her move, although he did not realise the possible effects of her fascination.

He took hold of her wrists, still smiling into her eyes, and took them down, holding them firmly, yet gently, and then—he could not tell afterwards how it was done—her face was close to his and he could see her eyes smiling as he kissed her full, red lips.

It was a kiss unlike any he had ever experienced before, for the Mexicans kiss from the heart. Having tasted, it seemed as though the tropical sun had entered into his blood, and slipping his arms round her he held her lithe body to him and kissed her again and again until she broke from him and ran to her room, while Harrison hurriedly gathered up the papers he had been sent for and rode back to the dam, where he acted so queerly for the rest of the day that Burnham began to think the sun had affected his head.

That night the men played cards as usual, except that Pepita, with the perversity of a woman, took her old position where she could watch Burnham. The latter noticed her action and was puzzled, thinking Harrison and the girl must have quarrelled, which thought was strengthened by the former's queer behaviour in the afternoon, so he watched them both narrowly for some sign.

But Harrison acted as usual and Pepita watched the game without comment, as was her custom, although occasionally she stole a side-long glance at Harrison when she thought Burnham was not looking.

When the men had finished playing, however, and Burnham and her father had gone out to look after the horses, she came over to Harrison and slipped her arms round his neck, while he, in defiance of the good resolutions he had been making all the evening to the contrary, drew her shapely head down and caressed her.

He was five thousand miles from home and lonely, he told himself.

So the days passed, Harrison vowing all day during his work at the dam to do differently, only to hopelessly surrender when alone with Pepita under the fascination of her eyes.

After the day's work was over, she always found an opportunity to be alone with him, if only for a moment, and her good-night kiss became as much of a certainty as the game of cards it always followed.

At length a day came when the heat was so intense that work was stopped on the dam and the two men came home before noon. The shelter of the house was very welcome, and after dinner, followed by a bath in the portable bath tub that Burnham had rigged up, the two lay down to cool off—Burnham on the bed in his room, and Harrison in the living room on an old stretcher that Pedro at some time or other had filched from the railway company.

Pepita darkened the house as much as was possible without cutting off what little air there was moving, and stepped noiselessly about busy with her household duties.

These finished, she sat down in the room where Harrison was sleeping. Old Pedro had gone over to Concho despite the heat.

Pepita knew by her lover's measured breathing that he was sleeping, although his form showed indistinctly in the half darkness. His arm was lying over the side of the stretcher, and a beam of light from a crack in the wall near the floor illumined the white skin and blue veins that showed above the sun-burnt wrist.

She stole softly over to him and, kneeling down, gently raised his arm on to the stretcher, then touching her lips lightly to the white skin laid her head against it—she loved him with all her heart.

He moved slightly as though her touch had disturbed him and she slipped back to her seat, fearing to wake him.

There she fell into a reverie. How she loved this blue-eyed, fair-haired, laughing señor—the first she

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had really loved; although so many had wooed her. She loved Señor Burnham also, she thought, but in such a different way, more as she did her father—the father who had always been good to her, though people called him bad.

As she mused, there came to her for the first time the terrifying thought that she might sometime lose him. Perhaps he was betrothed to some woman in far-away England, and was only trifling with her!

The thought of it started her to her feet trembling, and she clenched her hands. But her love for him came to the rescue, blind as a woman's love always is. There was a difference in their stations, of course, she thought, yet in some way she knew it would come right, so she sat in darkness with her hands clasped over her knees and built the airy castles that were so soon to come tumbling down.

As she sat there in deep thought, there came dragging its loathsome length through a crack in the adobe wall that pest of the American continent, a rattlesnake.

On it came across the floor until it was just opposite the head of the stretcher, when Harrison moved uneasily in his sleep, and his arm dropped down again in the ray of sunlight and swung slowly.

The movement alarmed the snake and the sound of its rattles rang out shrilly as the reptile threw itself into a coil. The warning sound woke Pepita from her reverie. She could see nothing clearly in the darkness except the white arm that was swaying but she realised the danger, and, crossing the room with an action as quick as the thought that prompted it, knelt protectingly in front of the stretcher just as the ugly head struck out of the darkness, burying its fangs in her hand.

"*Madre di Dios!*" she gasped under her breath as she felt the sting, and the snake struck her again—this time in her shoulder through the thin dress.

Then her senses came back to her, and groping blindly in the dark with her uninjured hand, she seized the reptile's neck, and with superhuman strength crushed its life out, as it lay with its fangs entangled in her dress, where it had struck a third time.

All through this, with the exception of a slight outcry when the snake first struck, she had made no sound. Something seemed to tell her to do this for the man she loved so silently that he would not waken, and Harrison, after stirring slightly when she cried out, slept quietly through it all.

At length she rose. The poison was working through her veins, and her brain reeled so that she almost fell as she bent over the man she had saved.

She laid her head down on his shoulder for a moment, and, as though he had dreamt it, his arm slipped round her neck. For a second she stayed in his embrace, and then, disengaging herself softly, she kissed him lightly on the lips—as lightly as the mother kisses the babe she fears to wake—and left him.

At the door she paused for a moment, and looked back into the darkened room, then with a gasp that was almost a sob forced her way out into the sunshine.

She tried to close the door after her but her strength was failing, and she could not, so she left it open with the bright sunlight streaming into the room.

After a time Burnham came, and went over to Harrison and shook him.

"Come on, lazy!" he said. "It's time to wake up."

Harrison sat up rubbing his eyes.

"I have had the queerest dream, Burnham," he added. "I dreamt that Pepita——"

Old Pedro stepped in just then and he stopped. The Mexican held a telegram in his hand.

"For you, señor," he said, handing it to Harrison.

"I'll be back in a minute to see what it says," said Burnham, surmising that the message was from home, and went out.

Harrison tore off the yellow covering and read the slip. It was from his sweetheart at home, and read:

"I misjudged you, Dick. Come home."

It was signed simply "Mary," and he read it again to make sure. In that moment he was happier than he ever believed that a reconciliation with Mary could make him, and hurried out to tell Burnham the good news, knowing how glad his friend would be, but in his happiness giving not one thought to Pepita.

Hardly twenty yards away in the sage brush that surrounded the house he found Burnham—found him on his knees on the ground, rocking to and fro in the throes of an incontrollable grief, holding in his arm a shapeless, swollen form that had once been the beautiful Pepita whom he had loved.

Charles Russell Riley.

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The Opportunity of Zamia Leigh.

THE STORY OF AN UNDERSTUDY.

"I WILL not!"

"But why?"

"There is no need for me to be more explicit. I have no quarrel with either play or playwright, as I have said before; but if Zamia Leigh is to understudy me I throw up the part. That is my last word!"

"This is intolerable! I have ventured a small fortune on the production of this piece, and now, at the very last moment, when failure on your part to appear would virtually spell ruin for me, you deliberately propose to leave me in the lurch!"

"Well, I have told you, and, so far as I am concerned, there is an end of the matter."

"But what harm, in Heaven's name, has Zamia Leigh done *you?* I don't know a quieter, more inoffensive girl."

"I decline to discuss Miss Leigh's perfections or imperfections at this, or any other time."

"By Jove! you women are enough to drive a man out of the few senses you credit him with possessing," said Ewart Jaffray desperately, seizing his hat and making for the door. "I am going down to the theatre now, and shall expect a definite message from you before four o'clock this afternoon."

Annette Hope does not seem in the slightest degree disturbed or ruffled. She is tall, handsome, dark; the rich colouring of her skin, telling unmistakably of Spanish or Italian blood in greater or less proportion. The most distinguished actress of the day, she has had the ball at her feet for several seasons past, and now is in the position to dictate, not only to managers, but to the public, who, sooth to say, will not as a rule submit to the autocratic, save in the case of exceptional genius, and not always then, if genius presumes too liberally and abuses with too high a hand, its privileges and advantages.

The history of the new play in which Annette Hope was looked for—alike by the critics and the public generally—to out-do all her previous records, is somewhat peculiar.

Its writer was but a comparatively young man; his name, in fact, being absolutely unknown in literary circles, as also to the man in the street. Five years or more before the date of this story he had met Annette Hope at the house of some mutual friends, the impression on both sides being, from the very outset, of a decidedly fervid character, and ripening rapidly in the sun of each succeeding opportunity.

Cyril Chumley, barrister-at-law, and a literary student of no mean merit, was early imbued with an overmastering desire to write a play which should have in it such a woman's part as should, as created by his idol, lift her high above even the pedestal upon which she already stood. He had no thought of self in all this; the reputation which might, and, in the event of success, no doubt would accrue to himself, had no place in his sanguine anticipations of fame and reward. The woman he worshipped was his sole animating influence. Of course she knew it, for when did woman exist who was unconscious of a man's adoration? As naturally, of course, it pleased her, seeing that, according to her lights, she loved him.

Somehow the great piece was long in the writing; Chumley seeming never to be quite satisfied with it.

One day, about two months before her interview with Ewart Jaffray, she called upon Cyril at his chambers in the Temple. He was out, but had left in the littered evidence upon his desk, proof of hard and recent work. He had, indeed, that morning put the

"You deliberately propose to leave me in the lurch!"

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finishing touches to his play. An accomplished fact, it waited now but for the interpreter.

At any other time Annette Hope would have been eager to see that which was to bring about the crowning event of her life; but it so chanced that curiosity irresistibly prompted her to do more than glance at a note, in a woman's handwriting, lying invitingly open, and only half-concealed amongst the other papers.

There was not much in it (she had no nice scruples as to reading it); not enough, anyway, to account for the fit of furious spleen and jealousy to which it gave rise. It was just a few graceful words of thanks to Cyril Chumley for a kind act of his in recommending the writer for an engagement at the principal theatre in Edinburgh. It was signed "Zamia Leigh."

It was while, still with her back to the door, she held the letter in her hand, conning it, with contracted brow, for the third time, that Annette Hope was conscious of some one standing behind her. Turning sharply, she saw a slight figure, garbed in some soft clinging white stuff. The eyes which looked inquiringly into her own out of a face delicately small and very fair, were large and lustrous—almost too large indeed, for they appeared to dominate their owner's personality.

Annette Hope, although she had never set eyes upon the girl before, instinctively knew her to be Cyril Chumley's correspondent, and the knowledge made all the hot Southern blood within her rush madly to her brain and finger-tips.

Zamia, utterly innocent, as she knew herself to be, of offence as toward this indignant-eyed Juno, could not repress a look of timid surprise at the other's hostile attitude.

"Miss Zamia Leigh, I believe?"

"That is my name, certainly; but I fail to——"

"Are you in the habit, may I ask," interrupted the actress, "of accepting favours from, and of writing sweet little notes of gratitude, to Mr. Cyril Chumley?"

This with an assumption of the finest scorn, and in her best high tragedy manner.

"Really—I—do not know you!" said Zamia, roused out of her habitual gentleness; "neither am I aware by what right you, as a perfect stranger, put to me so insulting a question?"

"No? There may be a difference of opinion with regard to that perhaps." (Here the actress gathered up, with a grand gesture, her ample skirts). "Maybe, you have heard of me—my name is Hope—Annette Hope; and Cyril Chumley is an old and very dear friend of mine—that is all. I would merely, therefore, suggest" (with her fingers on the handle of the door) "that Miss Leigh should, for the future, be careful, very careful, not to write too many epistles of *this* kind, as possibly her motive in so doing, as also in paying undesirable morning visits to bachelor barristers, may be unhappily misconstrued—to her obvious detriment."

Before Zamia could clearly comprehend, much less reply to this caustic tirade, Annette Hope had left the room, shutting the door behind her.

Dropping into a chair Zamia burst into tears. Recovering somewhat after a while, but fearing that Cyril would return and find her in this state, she wrote him the following note, laying it where he could not fail to see it at once upon his arrival:

"DEAR MR. CHUMLEY—

"I have decided not to leave London just at present. I am anxious about my father, whom I think you know is far from well. I shall, therefore, under these circumstances, not need your kind letter of introduction to Mr. Campbell in Edinburgh, and so I re-inclose it now, with many thanks for the trouble you took in the matter. I shall try for an engagement in town.

"Yours sincerely,

"ZAMIA LEIGH.

"P.S.—I did not know Miss Annette Hope was a friend of yours."

When Cyril Chumley read Zamia's note he was puzzled at first as to its drift.

Then the true meaning of the postscript flashed upon him; light broke, and he reviled the fate which had made possible a meeting between these two.

Not once, up to this, had he wavered in his fealty to Annette; but shrewdly suspecting that with the predisposition to passionate injustice of her mother's race, she had wounded Zamia—wounded her sorely, and in a way that would make healing a matter of much difficulty, he experienced a revulsion, a change in his feeling towards her, which augured badly for love's continuance. With regard to Zamia his sentiments had been those of a big brother—nothing more; but it is certain now that he began to see her with different eyes. An inexplicable desire to shield her from Annette Hope's malevolency and spite, laid hold upon him with a strength and grip he could not shake off or resist.

The girl was, save for her father—whose state of health was such as to render him practically useless as a protection—alone in the world. She had been brought to the young man's notice by a theatrical friend, who fancied that she might perhaps fill a vacancy in the cast of *My Lady Penitent*.

Cyril Chumley, the first day he met her, saw latent talent in the girl, and the opportunity offering of a good opening in an Edinburgh theatre, he gave her his good word. Now, however, that events had taken this unexpected turn, he had no doubts as to what he ought to do—what, indeed, he ought to have done in the first instance.

Swayed by no other motive than a wish to advantage both himself and her, he pressed upon her the position of understudy to Annette Hope.

Zamia at first greatly feared to accept, but confident in her own powers, and relying upon Cyril's ability to "see her through," she consented, upon the one condition, that she should never at any time, whether at rehearsal or elsewhere, be brought into personal contact with her principal. As this was quite in accordance with Chumley's own ideas and wishes, strict silence in the matter was maintained, the understudy's identity remaining a mystery. That the secret ultimately leaked out, we know, with results fearfully disastrous to one woman, inasmuch as her fall contributed to the rise of that other upon whom she laid all the burden of that which really sprung from a reckless surrendering to her own ungovernable passions.

In the manager's office at the theatre two men sat anxiously discussing the situation.

Four o'clock went by and still no word from *The Prince's* leading lady.

"Jaffray," said Cyril Chumley, as the last silvery tinkle sounded from the little clock on the top of the bureau, "I have made up my mind! Zamia Leigh shall play 'Lady Susan'! If Miss Hope elects to sue us for breach of contract, I think, as a barrister, I know the law enough to be confident that the day would be ours."

Beyond a slight paleness there was nothing in either voice or manner which indicated mind disturbance or infirmity of purpose.

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"But, my dear fellow!" protested the other; "had we not better give her, say, an hour's grace. You see, she has been largely advertised, and she is so popular that I'm afraid we shouldn't come out of it with unbroken heads."

"Not half-an-hour! not five minutes!" said Cyril bitterly. "I have my reasons—strong reasons—for giving the part to Miss Leigh, and Annette Hope must look to herself. As to the other matter, we must at once issue counter notices and advertisements. Make them as emphatic as possible, and—leave the rest to me."

Ewart Jaffray and Cyril Chumley were old college intimates, and so, the former knowing much and suspecting more, of his friend's life-story, had his own private opinion with regard to this absolute change of front. This, however, he kept religiously to himself, betraying only by the faintest of smiles his suspicions as to the other's manifestly expressed interest in the fair young understudy.

An hour later, and when, Chumley long since gone, Ewart Jaffray had quite made up his mind that his enterprise must certainly be relegated to the limbo of the might-have-beens, a commissionaire brought him a laconic note:

"I have changed my mind. I *will* play Lady Susan *under existing circumstances*; you can make your arrangements.

"Annette Hope."

In less than ten minutes Jaffray burst into Cyril Chumley's workroom in Hare Court, Temple.

"Look here!" he cried excitedly, holding out to the other the actress' note.

"Well!" quietly remarked Chumley, and returning the paper. "What's the trouble? The lady is too late—that is all; a by no means unusual thing with the majority of her sex; that is, according to my experience."

"But of course you will not insist now upon Miss Leigh's playing the lead?"

"But, indeed, I most certainly shall, so, my dear Ewart, see to it that the announcements I suggested an hour ago in your room are issued without delay. Fortunately, Miss Leigh is, I know, both letter and business perfect. There is no reason, therefore, why the date of production should be postponed by so much even as a day."

"But just imagine, Chumley! She—Annette Hope, I mean—has got the whip hand of us—and will use it!"

"As I said before, I don't think so, and am therefore, prepared to take the consequences."

Ewart Jaffray, despite his admiration and regard for his friend, shrugged his shoulders in good-humoured semi-pathetic fashion, as being a trifle unconcerned on this point.

"You know," he said, "how I am situated in the matter. Every shilling almost I possess is staked on this venture. What am I to do if things go wrong?"

"They will *not* go wrong—take my word for it. I know Zamia Leigh's power, and what that power is worth and is capable of effecting. More, should disaster come, I will myself guarantee you against personal loss."

Cyril Chumley was a rich man, and could make this offer worth the accepting.

But the stiletto was not allowed to descend on its murderous errand.

If you *don't* play Ping-Pong, get a copy of "Table-Tennis, and How to Play It," at once By studying it you will soon become an expert player. It costs 1s., and is published by Pearson's.

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"Don't insult me, old man!" cried Ewart Jaffray, hastily. "Perhaps I am wrong—I hope I am. Anyway, I will at once announce our change of programme. Good-night! If I have belittled your judgment, forgive me. Good-night!"

The public were in no wise prepared for the substitution of an altogether untried novice (novice, that is, so far as the metropolis was concerned) for its favourite, and, in a way, resented it. Various were the critical and other comments in the Press and in clubrooms the town over.

It was as though our own Ellen Terry were, without good and sufficient reason publicly given, suddenly to throw up an important part on the eve of a great production.

In the present instance no explanation was vouchsafed, the published advertisements simply stating that the part of Lady Susan Strangeways, in Mr. Chumley's new play would, until further notice, be undertaken by Miss Zamia Leigh, her first appearance in London.

Far from affecting general interest in the new piece, expectation and curiosity were decidedly responsible for a marked increase in the desire to be present at the initial performance. It was rumoured that Annette Hope had left town for Paris, but beyond that (and even that was unprovable) nothing certain was known.

On the morning of the day of the opening Zamia received a note from Chumley, in which, after bidding her "good-speed," and giving her a few last words of encouragement and advice, he said: "I would like you to remember that, much as success will mean to you, to me it will mean more, *although* (and these concluding words she fancied to be somewhat tremulously written) *your success or failure will be alike to me in this, that Zamia Leigh will be Zamia Leigh still!*"

To read between the lines in matters of the heart is a woman's right and privilege, and certainly she is man's superior in both the method and the manner of it.

It needed, however, no expert to determine the real meaning of Chumley's words. Zamia instinctively knew that her hour had come; that the man who, ever since she had known him, had treated her with that kindliness and thoughtful gentleness, which in itself spoke volumes, was now more to her than all the world beside, as she to him.

For the moment the knowledge created a nervousness almost uncontrollable; but as the day wore on she became calmer, looking forward even with the indomitable fighting-spirit of the true artist to the now near-at-hand crisis of her life.

The curtain had gone up on the first act, and the house, crowded to its very fullest, had settled down to keenly critical consideration of piece and players.

Men's eyes and ears were, however, set to see and hear but one thing. Every movement of Zamia, every word she uttered was weighed in the balance, and, as time went on, found not only to be far from wanting, but to be certain to earn for the young provincial a very foremost place in the front rank of her profession.

Chumley was not in the theatre. Never at any time a man of much nerve, he was now pacing the embankment hard by, in no enviable state of mind.

Would Zamia fulfil his prophecy with regard to her? Of course she would. Should there be failure it would be his and his alone.

Then his thought went out to that other woman who, by her unreasoning jealousy and misdirected passion, had for ever torn herself out of his heart. Where was she, what was she doing? He might have had an answer to these questions had he but turned his head as a brougham passed close to the kerb.

The woman in it—an evil-eyed fury, with both jewelled hands convulsively clutching the top of the lowered window-frame, glared vengefully at him as the carriage whirled past, for, though his back was towards her, she knew his figure.

Presently, tired of watching the lamp-flecked river, and of hearing the lap-lapping of the water against the granite barrier, he moved to go up Savoy Hill into the Strand.

Reaching the theatre he passed unnoticed through the stage-entrance, and so on to the stage.

The curtain was down previous to the last act. Up to the present it had been a success, for both author and actress, all along the line.

There was yet five minutes of interval.

The stage was set for an elaborate conservatory scene, wonderfully painted and stage-managed.

The vista, which stretched to the extreme back of the stage, gave an impression from the front of illimitable distance of crystal, leafy beauty.

By a plashing fountain in the centre, shaded by luxuriant tropical plants, interspersed with fairy lights, sat Zamia, waiting the curtain's rise.

The orchestra was playing a dreamy waltz, peculiarly appropriate to the scene.

Behind a palm, at the right-hand second entrance, stood Chumley, watching Zamia, his eyes telling a love-tale impossible of misinterpretation.

What happened then, passed, as he has since said, with dream-like rapidity.

Raising his eyes he saw, gliding stealthily but swiftly down the green avenue from the back a woman wrapped to the feet in a long black domino.

Before he could think it out or comprehend the situation, the figure halted behind Zamia and, poising her hand, in which something glittered, a second, seemed as though about to strike the unconscious actress.

But the stiletto was not allowed to descend on its murderous errand.

The wrist, fast fixed in an iron grip, remained extended aloft; its owner unable to do more than hiss out her passionate disappointment. The stage, save for these three, was quite deserted; the leafiness, too, doing much to conceal this "play within a play."

"Miss Leigh," whispered Chumley, hoarsely and peremptorily, "leave the stage; don't return till you get your call!"

To Zamia it all seemed absolutely unreal; but she did as he bid her.

On her way to her room she met Jaffray, who asked the cause of her paleness and agitation.

"Come with me!" she wildly interrupted him. "Come!" almost dragging him in the direction of the stage.

"My dear Miss Leigh! The curtain will go up in a moment! What is it? I see nothing!"

Neither did she. The neighbourhood of the fountain, the whole stage even, was void of life.

"But—but I left them here!"

"Left them? Left whom?" somewhat impatiently queried Jaffray. "But tell me after the show, it's too late now." And as he swiftly left her side, the curtain rose, discovering her seated by the fountain side.

For the play, it need only be said, that it was an unqualified triumph for all concerned. Again and again was Zamia led out by Jaffray to receive the applause and congratulations of the house.

But the author—where was he?

No one knew; and so it was that the writer of the most successful play London had seen for years was apologised for as being absent.

Immediately before the commencement of the third and last act, the stage-doorkeeper saw Cyril Chumley, with a tall, black-cloaked lady, whom he fancied he recognised, upon his arm, pass out and enter a waiting brougham. The gentleman it was who gave the order "Home!" the carriage driving rapidly away westwards.

* * * * *

"You quite understand me?"

It was Cyril Chumley who spoke; as, standing by the table in Annette Hope's dining-room in her Duke Street flat, he looked sternly into the eyes of the woman who faced him, defiant and unabashed.

As she did not answer, he addressed her again.

"There is," he said, "no other course open to you. You are a rich woman, and to give up your profession and your home in England will be no hardship. That which you—and I—and—one other know, shall remain unknown to the world on this one condition only—that within twelve hours you leave London. I shall expect to receive a note from you by evening to-morrow dated from Dover (or, better still, a wire in the morning) to say that you are about to cross to France. I make no secret of my intention to marry Zamia Leigh, if she will have me; and I am vain enough to think that she will. Knowing you as I do, I conceive the knowledge of that fact to be part of your punishment, which, however, you have brought upon yourself, and for which you have no one but yourself to blame."

Up to this she had resolutely, though with difficulty, kept silence.

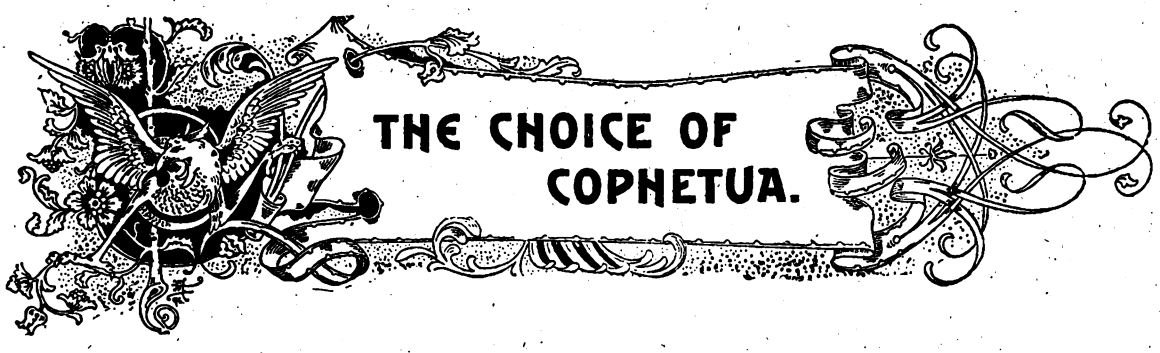
Now she spoke.

"I *will* go! for, like a coward, you hold me down—and—I cannot help it; but to say that it was *I* who began it all. *I!* is a lie!"

She closed her eyes in the intensity of her passion, as she blazed out the word.

When she opened them again, prepared to launch at him the uttermost of which she was capable—he was gone!

Ralph Enderby.



"Shall you marry him, Nora?"

"It's manners to wait to be asked," returned Nora.

"Hasn't he asked you?" persisted Will Cable.

"That would be telling," Nora Marsh replied.

Then she laughed up at the young giant leaning over the back of the armchair and regarding her with a look at once quizzical and puzzled. He was just as gentle, as retiring, as shy as ever. And yet the world had great things to say of his wisdom, his indomitable pluck in the face of distressing obstacles, the lofty scientific value of his researches and discoveries. He had been interviewed and lauded. The critics were unanimous in his praise. And here he was, back in the beloved, book-lined old room where they had quarrelled as children—just the same delightful fellow of five years before.

"I suppose you know we're awfully proud of you, Will," she said. She had been watching him dreamily, trying to fancy that powerful, cropped, dark head adorned with the soft waves of the lad who used to be so careful of his personal appearance when he was home from college on his vacations. "I keep telling people what great friends we were when we were young. I don't say a word about the torture you made me suffer when you kidnapped the doll."

"You may not happen to remember, either, your revenge for that injury!"

"Oh, I do," she cried, and laughed out. "Indeed I do! You were taking Laura Miller to play tennis, and Bobby——"

"I have always thought the sense of humour in your small brother was inspired and developed by his sister. To accidentally turn the garden hose on a young man clad in the height of fashion, was a peculiar evidence of misdirected energy! Now, what are you——"

Carriage wheels had stopped before the door. They could hear the servant crossing the hall. "Mr. Reginald Raymond," announced the man.

Mr. Raymond, bland and placid, round-faced, round-eyed, hat in hand and monocle in eye, made his appearance. Was he too early? Was Miss Marsh ready? He had been assured the first act was unusually strong. Mr. ——; ah yes, Mr. Cable, to be sure. He had heard of Mr. Cable. Quite pleased to meet him! Was this Miss Marsh's cloak? Would she permit him? Good-evening, Mr. Cable!

Then Miss Marsh had taken up her bouquet, had gathered around her the folds of her opera-wrap of old-rose panne velvet, had sent a sweet, swift, mocking look at Cable standing deserted—and was gone.

But, although she heartily enjoyed the gay comedy to which they went, she had not the faintest idea of the comedy in which she played a wholly unconscious part. How could she dream that Reginald Raymond had

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finally decided to bestow upon her the inestimable honour of his favour? How could she suppose that after long deliberation he had come to the conclusion that upon her fair shoulders should fall the mantle of his princely preference? How could she—in her wildest moments of prophetic rapture—imagine that he, the heir to millions, the bright particular star of half-a-dozen seasons of ambitious mothers, had finally decided that she should rule his household, and shed lustre on his name?

He was making no rash decision. He repeatedly strengthened his heart by this reassurance, while they drove to the theatre, while he sat by her side at the play—was her *vis-à-vis* at supper. Her family was one of not only social but intellectual pre-eminence. Her father had been twice a Member of Parliament. Her brother had held a high diplomatic post abroad. Their friends were of the most exclusive. Their acquaintances were those of the cultured—the artistic world. To be sure, the Marshes had no money to spare. But—what was money to him? And when it came to grace and wit, and distinction, and beauty, and above all, that exquisite indefinable possession we call breeding—there was not a girl who might be mentioned in the same breath with her—no, by George! not one! And he would marry her—he would! He'd tell her so this very night.

He turned to study her again, and with pulses that quickened as he looked. Faultless of form, graceful as only a beautiful woman and a tigress can be, with features perfect as those cut on the silver coins of Syracuse, she was worthy the incense of men's homage—worthy the quite as precious glory of woman's jealousy! There was just a glimpse of creamy flesh through the meshes of Mechlin at arms and bosom. The eyes that looked out from under long, white lids, had the laughing loveliness of a child's. One fancied the full scarlet lips could be as scornful as they were sensitive—as passionate as they were sweet. And those who knew Nora Marsh knew the warmth her proud heart held, the brilliance her brain harboured, the gentleness which was as much a part of her divine power as her beauty itself! Yes, he was making a perfectly proper choice. Would she be overwhelmed to be selected as the bride of a millionaire? To have a mansion in the country, a town house in Park Lane? There was a charming castle on a blue Scottish moor he would buy for her if she fancied a sojourn in the land of the heather. As for jewels—he smiled again there. All women loved jewels. How many men could offer to the chosen companion of his life such rare gems as he?

But, while he found himself the envied of all men, sailing beside her down the Adriatic—he had almost fixed on the Adriatic for their wedding trip—he used his language as the sapient Frenchman divined—to conceal his thoughts.

"That Mr. Cable seems a fine sort of a fellow. No end of talk about him at the clubs. He is the lion of the hour, they say."

"Oh, we quite claim Mr. Cable at our house! His every honour is a personal triumph for us."

"So good of you to say so!" Raymond was nothing if not complacent. "He ought to be very much flattered!"

A queer little look flashed at him from under the curling dark lashes.

"It is we who are flattered, Mr. Raymond!"

His laugh was leniency itself.

"The extent of your charity is only being revealed to me! I wonder if I may—if I might—plead for mercy for myself!"

They were driving slowly homeward through the silence, the crispness, the blueness, of a perfect February night.

"You! What could the gods give you that you have not?"

He was conscious of the tremor that went through the slight frame. A sense of his supremacy shook him. He had been right, then! All his golden anticipations were to be realised. Not that he had doubted for a moment that any girl in her right mind would refuse him—Reginald Raymond! His arm slipped confidently round her waist.

"The gods could give me nothing—unless you were theirs to give!"

"Ah!" she said softly. She moved a little until she was free from his arm. "You—you are quite sure——"

That was just where Raymond's bad quarter of an hour began.

"Sure—indeed, yes! I have not spoken hastily. I have given the matter—a weighty one as you will admit—due consideration." He adjusted his monocle. He wished the coachman would drive more slowly. "I recollect of what I owe to my family, to my position, to—if I may say so—to myself!"

"Yes," sighed a tender voice. "Oh—yes!"

"And I have made up my mind that you are the only woman I shall marry—you!"

He could again feel the tremor of the slender shape near. He put out a fat little hand. His touch was not tentative by any means. It was determined. There was no false modesty about Raymond. In the gloom of the carriage he almost forgot the charm, the beauty, the power of the girl. All these were engulfed in his own superb condescension—a condescension of which she was aware. Her choking voice when she spoke proved that.

"And I have decided it is you—you whom I have chosen for—my wife!"

"You have——" How overwhelmed she was!—"not spoken rashly?"

"My mind," he declared heroically, "is irrevocably made up!"

"You are sure you will not regret——"

He cut short the faltering voice. "Your timidity is uncalled for, dear. I never change my mind. When shall it be?—confound that coachman!"

The carriage door swung back. Raymond walked with Miss Marsh up the steps.

"Don't come in!" she intreated sweetly. "I have an engagement. And—I'm very sorry, you know and very grateful for the honour, of course, but I don't care for you—that way. Thank you ever so much! Take care! There's been a frost! The steps are quite slippery. I've had a most enjoyable evening. Good-night—good-night!"

Then her cheeks scarlet, her lips apart, and breathing hard she was in the library—was facing a man who had risen from his low chair in the light of the dying fire.

"Well?" he questioned hoarsely. He came slowly towards her. "Well? He proposed to-night. I knew he would. Get it over for Heaven's sake! When is it to be? When are you to give yourself—your sweet self—to any man's arms?"

She went straight towards him. Her colour had suddenly gone. She was white as the roses she carried. And her cheeks were wet and shining in the firelight.

"Whenever you will take me!" she said.

Kate M. Cleary.

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A THOUSAND DEATHS.

I HAD been in the water about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my last hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb-tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by; but now I gave up attempting to breast the stream, and contented myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged.

I went through the regular school and college routine of a son of parents well-to-do, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavoured to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious follies, and was disowned by my people, ostracised by the society I had so long outraged; and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would neither see me again nor give me more, I took a first-class passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination—from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic—to find myself at last, an able seaman of thirty, in the full vigour of my manhood, drowning in San Francisco Bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sea, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an up-river steamer's starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming louder; the waves larger, fiercer—I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

He was inexorable. He was not a father, but a scientific machine.

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The scene, in which I was chief actor, was a curious one. A glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through the mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hose but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before I had become a wanderer, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, conversant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purposes. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the centre of this was a vacuum gauge.

The water in the tube moved upwards and downwards, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labour.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils, and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff dose of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted—my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognise me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor, and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles, I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realise, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'c'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father, and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as my appearance had been most opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "but only in the small matter of drowning."

But, to take a reef in my yarn—he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailors' mess for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable state-room and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages; and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for which we were bound. He had taken possession of an unchartered South Sea Island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long before I discovered the horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life my father had abandoned the charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches so far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable. It was his intention to pre-empt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvellous results we afterwards obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thoughts had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology, and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses. Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality, and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use

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of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method—and by practical experimentation prove the possibility—of renewing the vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognised the futility of such endeavour after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco Bay—but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his ærotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent his yacht away for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but the one course was open—I must submit. Escape from the island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had placed all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father, but a scientific machine. I wonder yet how it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it punctually at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it was best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine, and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness, and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight

He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap.

No more disputes and no time lost if you refer to the official rules in "Table-Tennis, and How to Play it," by Messrs. Ritchie and Harrison, the Organisers of the Royal Aquarium Tournaments.

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chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple—a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condensed and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the tubing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognisant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on the respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much nerve; but after two ineffectual attempts at escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous, and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants, and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison régime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this did not affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine, and chloroform were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffocated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray toward vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tampering with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation from my unpleasant occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation which has been named "apergy." Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished not only to discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disentegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

By two powerful batteries, connected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their work by focussing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight whiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, which are equally colourless and odourless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium, and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second blacky, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation—perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odour of phosphorus. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were not.

G. J. W.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of my Return to Paris.

SCANT cause is there for me to tarry over the details of my return to Paris. A sad enough journey it was; as sad for myself as for my poor Michelot, since he rode with one so dejected as I.

Things had gone ill, and I feared that, when the Cardinal heard the story, things would go worse; for Mazarin was never a tolerant man, nor one to be led by the gospel of mercy and forgiveness. For myself I foresaw the rope—possibly even the wheel; and a hundred times a day I dubbed myself a fool for obeying the voice of honour with such punctiliousness, when so grim a reward awaited me. What mood was on me—me, Gaston de Luynes, whose honour had been long since besmirched and tattered until no outward semblance of honour was left it?

But swift in the footsteps of that question would come the answer—Yvonne. Aye, truly enough, it was because in my heart I had dared to hold a sentiment of love for her, the purest—nay, the only pure—thing my heart had held for many a year, that I would set nothing vile to keep company with that sentiment; that until my sun should set—and already it dropped swiftly towards life's horizon—my actions should be the actions of such a man as might win Yvonne's affections.

But let that be. This idle retrospective mood can interest you but little; nor can you profit from it, unless indeed it be by noting how holy and cleansing to the heart of man is the love—albeit unrequited—that he bears a good woman.

As we drew near Meung, where we lay on the first night of our journey, a light travelling chaise, going in the same direction, passed us at a gallop. As it flashed by I caught a glimpse of Eugène de Canaples' swart face through the window. Whether the recognition was mutual, I cannot say, nor does it signify.

When we reached the *Hotel de la Couronne*, half-an-hour later, we saw that same chaise disappearing round a corner of the street, whilst through the gateway the ostler was leading a pair of horses, foam-flecked and steaming with sweat.

Whither went Master Canaples at such a rate, and in a haste that caused him to travel day and night? To a goal he little looked for—or rather which in the madness of his headlong rush he could not see. So I was to learn ere long.

Next day I awoke betimes, and setting my window wide, to let in the fresh, clean-smelling air of that May morning, I made shift to dress. Save for the cackle of the poultry which had strayed into the courtyard, and the noisy yawns and sleep-laden ejaculations of the stable-boy who was drawing water for the horses, all was still, for it had not yet gone five o'clock.

But of a sudden a door opened somewhere, and a step rang out, accompanied by the jangle of spurs, and with it came a sharp, unpleasant voice calling for its owner's horse. There was a familiar sound in those shrill accents that caused me to thrust my head through the casement. But I was quick to withdraw it, as I recognised in the gaily-dressed little fellow below, my old friend Malpertuis, though I knew not what impulse made me draw back so suddenly.

From behind my curtains I watched Malpertuis riding out of the yard, saying, in answer to a parting question of the landlord, who had come upon the scene, that he would breakfast at Beaugency.

Then, as he rode down the street, he of a sudden raised his discordant voice and sang to the accompaniment of his horse's hoofs, and the burden of his song rang thus:

"A *Frondeur** wind
Got up to-day,
'Gainst Mazarin
It blows they say."

I listened in amazement to his raven's voice.

Whither was he bound, I asked myself, and whence a haste that made him set out fasting, and with an anti-cardinalist ditty on his lips, and ride two leagues to seek a breakfast in a village that did not hold an inn where a dog might be housed in comfort?

Like Eugène de Canaples, he travelled also towards a goal that he little dreamt of. And so albeit the one went south and the other north, these two men were, betwixt them, drawing together the threads of this narrative of mine, as anon you shall learn.

We reached Paris at dusk, three days later, and we went straight to my old lodging in the Rue St. Antoine.

Coupri started and gasped upon beholding me, and not until I had reviled him for a fool in a voice that was passing human, he would believe that I was no ghost. He too had heard the rumour of my death.

I dispatched Michelot to the Palais Royal, where, without permitting his motive to transpire, he was to ascertain for me whether M. de Montresor was in Paris, whether he still dwelt at the *Hotel des Cloches*, and at what hour he could be found there.

Whilst he was away I went up to my room, and there I found a letter which Coupri informed me had been left by a lackey a month ago, before the report that I had been killed had reached Paris, and since lain forgotten. It was a delicate note, to to which still hung the ghost of a perfume; there were no arms on the seal, but the writing I took to be that of my aunt,

* The *Frondeurs* were members of certain factions in France during the minority of Louis XIV., who were hostile to the Court and the minister, Mazarin, and gave rise to a series of civil dissensions from 1648 to 1654.

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the Duchesse de Chevreuse; and vaguely marvelling what motive she could have had for communicating with me, I cut the silk.

It was indeed from the Duchesse, but it contained no more than a request that I should visit her at her hotel on the day following that upon which she had written, adding that she had pleasing news for me.

I thrust the note into my pocket with a sigh. Of what could it avail me now to present myself at her hotel? Her invitation was for a month ago. Since then she would likely enough have heard the rumour that had been current, and would have ceased to expect me.

I caught myself wondering whether the news might have caused her a pang of regret, and somehow methought this possible; for of all my relatives, Madame de Chevreuse was the only one—and she was but my aunt by marriage—who of late years had shown me any kindness or even recognition. I marvelled what her pleasing news could be, and I concluded that probably she had heard of my difficulties, and wished once again to help me out of them. Well, my purse was hollow indeed at the moment; but I need not trouble her, since I was going somewhere where purses were not needed—on a journey to which no expenses are attached.

In my heart, nevertheless, I blessed the gracious lady who, for all the lies that the world may have told of her, was the kindest woman I had known, and the best—save one other.

I was still musing when Michelot returned with the information that M. de Montrésor was to be found at the *Hotel des Cloches*, whither he had gone to sup a few minutes before. Straightway I set out, bidding him attend me, and, muffled in my cloak, I proceeded at a brisk pace to the Rue des Fosses St. Germain, where the lieutenant's quarters were situated.

I left Michelot in the common room, and preceded by the plump little woman who owned the house, I ascended to Montrésor's chamber. I found the young soldier at table, and fortunately alone. He rose as I entered, and as the hostess, retreating, closed the door, I doffed my hat, and letting fall my cloak, revealed myself. His lips parted, and I heard the hiss of an indrawn breath as his astonished eyes fell upon my countenance. My laugh dispelled his doubts that I might be other than flesh and blood, yet not his doubts touching my identity. He caught up a taper, and coming forward he cast the light on my face for a moment, then, setting the candle back upon the table, he vented his surprise in an oath or two, which was natural enough in one of his calling.

"'Tis clear, lieutenant," quoth I, as I detached my sword from the baldrick, "that you believed me dead. Fate willed, however, that I should be restored to life, and so soon as I had recovered sufficient strength to undertake the journey to Paris I set out. I arrived an hour ago, and here I am, to redeem my word of honour, and surrender the sword and liberty which you but lent me."

I placed my rapier on the table and waited for him to speak. Instead, however, he continued to stare at me for some moments, and when at last he did break the silence, it was to burst into a laugh that poured from his throat in rich, mellow peals as he lay back in his chair.

My gorge rose. Had I travelled from Blois and done what I deemed the most honourable deed of my life to be laughed at for my pains by a foppish young jackanapes of his Eminence's Guards? Something of my displeasure must he have seen reflected in my face, for of a sudden he checked his mirth.

"Forgive me, M. de Luynes," he gasped. "For, alas! 'tis no matter for laughter, and albeit I laughed with more zest than courtesy, I give you my word that my admiration for you vastly exceeds my amusement. M. de Luynes," he added, rising and holding out his hand to me, "there are liars in Paris who give you an evil name—men who laughed at me when they heard that I had given you leave to go on parole to St Sulpice des Reaux that night, trusting to your word of honour that you would return if you lived. His Eminence dubbed me a fool, and went near to dismissing me from his service and yet I have now the proof that my confidence was not misplaced, since even though you were believed to be dead, you did not hesitate to bring me your sword."

"Monsieur, spare me!" I exclaimed, for in truth his compliments waxed as irksome as had been his whilom merriment.

He continued, however, his laudatory address, and when it was at last ended, and he paused exhausted alike in breath and brain, it was to take up my sword and return it to me with my parole, pronouncing me a free man, and advising me to let men continue to think me dead, and to withdraw from France. He cut short my half-protesting thanks, and calling the hostess bade her set another cover, whilst he invited me to share his supper. And as we ate he again urged upon me the advice that I should go abroad.

"For, by Heaven!" he added, "Mazarin has been as a raging beast since the news was brought him yesterday of his nephew's marriage."

"How!" I cried. "He has heard already?"

"He has indeed; and should he learn that your flesh still walks the earth, methinks it would go worse with you than it went even with Eugène de Canaples."

In answer to the questions with which I excitedly plied him, I drew from him the story of how Eugène had arrived the day before in Paris, and gone straight to the Palais Royal. M. de Montrésor had been on guard in the ante-chamber, and in virtue of an excitement noticeable in Canaples' bearing, coupled with the ill-odour wherein already he was held by Mazarin, the lieutenant's presence had been commanded in the Cardinal's closet during the interview, for his Eminence was never like to acquire fame for valour.

In his exultation of what had chanced, and at the manner in which Mazarin's castles in the air had been dashed to the ground, Canaples used little caution, or even discretion, in what he said. In fact, from what Montrésor told me, I gathered that the fool's eagerness to be the first to bear the tidings to Mazarin sprang from a rash desire to gloat over the Cardinal's discomfiture. He had told his story insolently, almost derisively, and Mazarin's fury, driven beyond bounds already by what he had heard, became a very tempest of passion 'neath the lash of Canaples' impertinences. And naturally enough that tempest had burst upon the only head available—Eugène de Canaples—and the Cardinal had answered his jibes with interest by calling upon Montrésor to arrest the fellow and bear him to the Bastille.

When the astonished and sobered Canaples had indignantly asked upon what charge he was being robbed of his liberty, the Cardinal had laughed at him, and answered with his never-failing axiom that "he who sings, pays."

"You sang lustily enough just now," His Eminence had added, "and you shall pay by lodging a while in a dungeon of the Bastille, where you may lift up your voice to sing the *De Profundis*."

"Was my name not mentioned?" I anxiously inquired when Montrésor had finished.

"Not once. You may depend that I should have remarked it. After I had taken Canaples away, the Cardinal, I am told, sat down, and, still trembling with rage, wrote a letter which he straightway dispatched to the Chevalier Armand de Canaples at Blois."

"No doubt," I mused, "he attributes much blame to me for what has come to pass."

"Not a doubt of it. This morning he said to me that it was a pity your wings had not been clipped before you left Paris, and that his misplaced clemency had helped to bring him great misfortunes. You see, therefore, M. de Luynes, that your sojourn in France will be attended with great peril. I advise you to try Spain. 'Tis a martial country, where a man of the sword may find honourable and even profitable employment."

His counsel I deemed sound. But how follow it? Then of a sudden I bethought me of Madame de Chevreuse's friendly letter. Doubtless she would assist me once again, and in such an extremity as this. And with the conception of the thought came the resolution to visit her on the morrow. That formed, I gave myself up to the task of drinking M. de

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Montrésor under the table with a freeness of heart which had not been mine for months. In each goblet that I drained methought I saw Yvonne's sweet face floating on the surface of the red Armagnac; it looked now sad, now reproachful, still I drank on, and in each cup I pledged her.

CHAPTER XX.
Of how the Chevalier de Canaples became a Frondeur.

It wanted an hour or so to noon next day as I drove across the Pont Neuf in a closed carriage and was borne down the Rue St. Dominique to the portals of that splendid palace facing the Jacobins which bears the title of the Hotel de Luynes, and over the portals of which is carved the escutcheon of our house.

Michelot, in obedience to the orders I had given him, got down, only to be informed that Madame la Duchesse was in the country. The lackey who was summoned did not know where the lady might be found, nor when she might return to Paris. And so I was compelled to drive back almost despairingly to the Rue St. Antoine, and there lie concealed, nursing my impatience, until my aunt should return.

Daily I sent Michelot to the Hotel de Luynes to make the same inquiry, and to return daily with the same dispiriting reply, that there was no news of Madame la Duchesse.

In this fashion some three weeks wore themselves out, during which period I lay in my concealment, a prey to weariness unutterable. I might not venture forth save at night unless I wore a mask, and as masks were no longer to be worn without attracting notice, as during the late king's reign, I dared not indulge the practice.

Certainly my *ennui* was greatly relieved by the visits of Montrésor, which grew very frequent, the lad appearing to have conceived a fondness for me; and during those three weeks our fellowship at nights over a bottle or two engendered naturally enough a friendship and an intimacy betwixt us.

I had written to Andrea on the morrow of my return to Paris, to tell him how kindly Montrésor had dealt with me, and some ten days later the following letter was brought me by the lieutenant, to whom, for safety, it had been forwarded:

"My very dear Gaston,

"I have no words wherewith to express my joy at the good news you send me, which terminates the anxiety that has been mine since you left us on the disastrous morning of our nuptials.

"The uncertainty touching your fate, the fear that the worst might have befallen you, and the realisation that I, for whom you have done so much, might do naught for you in your hour of need, has been the one cloud to mar the sunshine of my own bliss.

"That cloud your letter has dispelled, and the knowledge of your safety renders my happiness complete.

"The Chevalier maintains his unforgiving mood, as no doubt doth also my Lord Cardinal. But what to me are the frowns of either so that my lady smile? My little Geneviève is yet somewhat vexed in spirit at all this; but I am teaching her to have faith in Time, the patron saint of all lovers who follow not the course their parents set them. And so that Time may be allowed to intercede and appeal to the parent heart with the potent prayer of a daughter's absence, I shall take my lady from Chambord some three days hence. We shall travel by easy stages to Marseilles, and there take ship for Palermo.

"And so, dear, trusty friend, until we meet again fare you well, and may God hold you safe from the wickedness of man, devil, and my Lord Cardinal.

"For all that you have done for me no words of mine can thank you; but should you determine to quit this France of yours and journey to Palermo after me, you shall never want a roof to shelter you or a board to sit at so long as roof and board are owned by him who signs himself, in love at least, your brother,

"Andrea de Mancini."

WHY REMAIN TOO FAT?

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Permanently? the reader will exclaim interrogatively. Yes, reader, permanently; that is the secret of the "Russell" treatment for the cure of corpulency. Yet it is not wholly a secret, for in "Corpulency and the Cure," the book which lies before us, Mr. F. C. Russell, the author of this remarkable work, and the founder of the still more remarkable treatment which bears his name, gives, *coram populo*, the RECIPE of the compound which forms the basis of his treatment. This compound, a liquid tonic pleasant to the palate is purely vegetable and perfectly harmless to the most delicate subject, as our stout readers may see for themselves if they care to procure a copy of the book by sending three penny stamps to Mr. F. Cecil Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., who will despatch the same by return post, under plain sealed envelope. The "Russell" system differs from other systems, not only by reason of its permanent reductive results, but because it entails no disagreeable restrictions, dietetic or otherwise—none but what any rational person anxious to disburden himself or herself of an excessive *couche* of subcutaneous fat would inevitably adopt. No violent exercise is necessary, nor is there any need for cathartics in any form. As to the semi-starvation methods that prevail, these are totally opposed to the "Russell" treatment, which, indeed, promotes appetite, and requires that the increased appetite shall be satisfied. This seems paradoxical, but is easily explained. The rapid elimination of the unwholesome fatty deposits from the system would be weakening under ordinary starvation methods, but the "Russell" treatment helps to give nourishment to the body, thus forming new blood and muscle, so that the strain upon the system is amply counteracted, and the whole organism restrengthened and revitalised.

Readers of "Corpulency and the Cure" will be very interested in the testimony of patients who have followed the "Russell" treatment. A section of the book contains a thousand extracts from letters written to him by Mr. Russell's grateful patients, and these expressions of opinion bear out to the full all the claims for his system advanced by the gifted author. We should say here that the reductive process begins within twenty-four hours of beginning the treatment, the decrease being (as the weighing machine will show) from ½lb. to 2lbs., even as much as 4lbs. in very extreme cases of fatness. This reduction is steadily maintained day by day until the required condition of slimness is reached, when the treatment may be abandoned. Let it be distinctly understood that the decrease is not merely abdominal, but manifests itself over the entire body, so that perfect and permanent symmetry and grace are attained. These facts are corroborated by the eloquent testimony alluded to above. We remark several extracts headed "One day test" (which might, with more lucidity, be called "First day test") in which the reduction brought about within the first twenty-four hours is stated to be the full 2lbs. There, stout friends, go you and do likewise! First of all, get the book.

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With a sigh I set the letter down. A sigh of love and gratitude it was; a sigh also of regret for the bright, happy boy who had been the source alike of my recent joys and sorrows, and whom methought I was not like to see again for many a day, since the peaceful vegetation of his Sicilian home held little attraction for me, a man of action.

It was on the evening of the last Sunday in May, while the bell of the Jesuits, close by, was tinkling out its summons to vespers, that Montrésor burst suddenly into my room, with the request that I should get my hat and cloak and go with him to pay a visit. In reply to my questions, "Monseigneur's letter to Armand de Canaples," he said, "has borne fruit already. Come with me and you shall learn how."

He led me past the Bastille and up the Rue des Tournelles to the door of an unpretentious house, upon which he knocked. We were admitted by an old woman to whom Montrésor appeared to be known, for, after exchanging a word or two with her, he himself led the way upstairs, and opened the door of a room for me.

By the melancholy light of a single taper burning upon the table, I beheld a fair-sized room, containing a curtained bed.

My companion took up the candle, and stepping to the bedside he drew apart the curtains.

Lying there, I beheld a man whose countenance, despite its pallor and the blood-stained bandages about his brow, I recognised for that of the little spitfire Malpertuis.

As the light fell upon his face the little fellow opened his eyes, and upon beholding me at his side, he made a sudden movement which wrung from him a cry of pain.

"Lie still, Monsieur," said Montrésor quietly.

But for all the lieutenant's remonstrances, he struggled up into a sitting posture, requesting Montrésor to set the pillows at his back.

"Thank God you are here, M. de Luynes!" he said; "I learnt at Canaples that you were not dead."

"You have been to Canaples?"

"I was the guest of the Chevalier for twelve days. I arrived there on the day after your departure."

"You!" I ejaculated. "Pray what took you to Canaples?"

"What took me there?" he echoed, turning his feverish eyes upon me almost with fierceness. "The same motive that led me to join hands with that ruffian St. Auban when he spoke of waging war against Mancini; the same motive that led me to break with him when I saw through his plans, and when the abduction of Mademoiselle was on foot; the same motive that made me come to you and tell you of the proposed abduction so that you might interfere if you had the power, or cause others to do so, if you had not."

I lay back in my chair and stared at him. Was this, then, another suitor of Yvonne de Canaples, and were all men mad with love of her?

Presently he continued, "When I heard that St. Auban was in Paris, having apparently abandoned all hope in connection with Mademoiselle, I obtained a letter from M. de La Rochefoucauld, who is an intimate friend of mine, and armed with this I set out. As luck would have it, I got embroiled in the streets of Blois with a couple of cardinalist gentlemen who chose to be offended by a lampoon of the *Fronde* that I was humming. I am not a patient man, and I am even indiscreet in moments of choler. I ended by crying, 'Down with Mazarin and all his creatures,' and I would of a certainty have had my throat slit had not a slight and elegant gentleman interposed, and, exercising a wonderful influence over my assailants, extricated me from my predicament. This gentleman was the Chevalier de Canaples. He was, strangely enough, in a mood to be pleased by an anti-cardinalist ditty, for his rage against Andrea de Mancini, which he took no pains to conceal, had extended already to the Cardinal, and from morn till night he did little else but revile the whole Italian brood, as he chose to dub the Cardinal's family.

I had only been there three days before I sustained a shock by the unexpected appearance at Canaples of St. Auban. The Chevalier, however, refused him admittance, and, baffled, the Marquis was forced to withdraw. But he went no further than Blois, where he hired himself a room at the *Lys de France*. The Chevalier hated him as a mad dog hates water; almost as much as he hated you. He spoke often of you, and always bitterly."

Before I knew what I had said, "And Mademoiselle?" I burst out. "Did she ever mention my name?"

Malpertuis looked up quickly at the question, and a wan smile flickered round his lips.

"Once she spoke of you to me, pityingly, as one might speak of a dead man whose life had not been good."

"Yes, yes," I broke in. "It matters little. Your story, M. Malpertuis."

"After I had been at the Chateau ten days, we learnt that Eugène de Canaples had been sent to the Bastille. The news came in a letter penned by his Eminence himself—a bitter, viperish letter, with a covert threat in every line. The Chevalier's anger went white hot as he read the disappointed Cardinal's epistle. His Eminence accused Eugène of being a *Frondeur*: M. de Canaples, whose politics had grown sadly rusted in the country, asked me the meaning of the word. I explained to him the petty squabbles betwixt Court and Parliament, in consequence of the extortionate imposts, and of Mazarin's avariciousness. I avowed myself a partisan of the *Fronde*, and within three days the Chevalier, who but a little time before had sought an alliance with the Cardinal's family, had become as rabid a *Frondeur* as M. de Gondi, as fierce an anti-cardinalist as M. de Beaufort.

"I humoured him in his new madness, with the result that, ere long, from being a *Frondeur* in heart, he thirsted to become a *Frondeur* in deeds; and he ended by begging me to bear a letter from him to the Coadjutor of Paris, wherein he offered to place at M. de Gondi's disposal, towards the expenses of the civil war which he believed to be imminent, as indeed it is, the sum of sixty thousand livres.

"Now albeit I had gone to Canaples for purposes of my own, and not as an agent of M. le Coadjuteur, still for many reasons I saw fit to undertake the Chevalier's commission; and so, bearing the letter in question, which was hot and unguarded, and charged with endless treasonable matter, I set out four days later for Paris, arriving here yesterday.

"I little knew that I had been followed by St. Auban. His suspicions must have been awakened, I know not how, and clearly they were confirmed when I stopped before the Coadjutor's house last night. I was about to mount the steps, when of a sudden I was seized from behind by half-a-dozen hands, and dragged into a side street. I got free for a moment and attempted to defend myself, but besides St. Auban there were two others. They broke my sword, and attempted to break my skull, in which they went perilously near succeeding, as you see. Albeit half-swooning, I had yet sufficient consciousness left to realise that my pockets were being emptied, and that at last they had torn open my doublet and withdrawn the treasonable letter from the breast of it.

"I was left bleeding in the kennel, and there I lay for nigh upon an hour, until a passer-by succoured me, and carried out my request to be brought hither and put to bed."

He ceased, and for some moments there was silence broken only by the wounded man's laboured breathing, which argued that his narrative had left him fatigued. At last I sprang up.

"The Chevalier de Canaples must be warned," I exclaimed.

"'Tis an ugly business," muttered Montrésor. "I'll wager a hundred pistoles that Mazarin will hang the Chevalier if he catches him just now."

"He would not dare!" cried Malpertuis.

"Not dare!" echoed the lieutenant. "The man who imprisoned the Princes of Conde and Conti and the Duke of Beaufort not dare hang a provincial knight with never a friend at Court! Pah! Monsieur, you do not know Cardinal Mazarin."

I realised to the full how likely Montrésor's prophecy was to be fulfilled, and before I left Malpertuis I assured him that he had not poured his story into the ears of an indifferent listener, and that I would straightway find means of communicating with Canaples.

(To be continued.)

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EASY WHEN UNDERSTOOD.

"In a country hotel, where I had stopped for supper," said a traveller, "I saw on the table some boiled eggs. As I reached for them the waitress said:

"'Do you like them hard or soft boiled?'

"'Soft,' I said.

"'The soft boiled are in the other dish,' said the waitress.

"Then, as I looked the other way on the table, I saw another dish of eggs. But they looked precisely like those in the first dish, and I wondered how anybody could tell them apart if they should ever get mixed up. As long as they were kept at the ends of the table where they were first placed it would be very simple, but suppose some polite guest should say to his neighbour:

"'Will you have the eggs?'

"And suppose the man should say 'Yes, thank you,' and take them, and suppose one dish in this way worked along the table until it was alongside the other; or, for that matter, suppose the dishes should change places, as they might easily do, who could tell then which were hard and which soft? I found myself rather amused by this idea, and I asked the waitress how they could tell which was which.

"'Why, the soft boiled are in the square dish and the hard boiled are in the oval dish.'

"Then I stopped talking for quite a while, for it seemed clear to me that I was, in some things, not an intellectual giant."

A SALVATIONIST'S REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

COLD CHILLS, DEBILITY, AND FAINTING FITS NEARLY ENDED HER DAYS.

MARVELLOUS BILE BEAN CURE.

"I began to have cold chills which ran through me as if cold water had been poured over my skin."

The speaker, Mrs. E. Sheldon, of 6 Bright Street, New Brighton, Morley, was telling a reporter the marvellous rescue from a serious illness by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness.

"It is four or five years ago," continued Mrs. Sheldon (now the picture of health), "that I first became ill. I had these cold chills; and got so weak and languid that I could not do my work. My appetite fell off; and even when I got something tempting to make me eat I had no relish for it. Doctors gave me medicine, which, however, did not bring me round. Eventually I got a "recommend" for the Cookridge Hospital, and stayed there under special treatment for three weeks. At the end of that time I was a little better, but upon my return home I soon drifted back into my old state.

"Then, three years ago, I began to have fits. I was at the sink one day when I thought there was such a terrible noise outside I could not make it out, so I went to the door. Directly I opened it I was overcome by a death-like sensation. I shouted out, and then I remember no more till I found myself lying down in bed with my friends gathered round me. The "noise in the street" only existed in my own head; and I had fainted immediately I reached the door.

The doctor was fetched, and said it was owing to my age, but another who attended me later said it was colic. A third described it as an epileptic fit. I was very ill in bed for several days; and suffered intense agony from flatulence. My body was swollen to a shocking extent; and when I took food it only made my condition worse. The fits continued, and as a rule I had them every few weeks. They made me a helpless invalid and kept me to my bed for ten days at a time.

"A strange thing occurred to me about this time, I lost my memory; my hearing was also affected, and my sight. I had to wear glasses to thread an ordinary needle; and without them I could not read a paper. I appeared to get worse in general health, losing flesh until I seemed all skin and bone. My nerves became quite shattered, and so afraid was I of being overtaken by a fit that I never dared go out without a bottle of sal volatile, or some stimulant handy for emergency.

"I am a member of the Salvation Army, and when I went to the meeting I always felt more at ease when I had someone for company who knew where to find the stimulant, should I go off in a fit.

Early this year I had a slight attack of English Cholera; and I think that the consequent weakness brought on a very bad fit.

"I was weeks bad after that, and could scarcely remember or see anything. I was in this condition when I heard of a man at Rothwell—where we used to live—who had benefited by taking Chas. Forde's Bile Beans. I was anxious to try them; and I determined to go in for a course. My condition was too serious for me to observe any decided change at first; but I felt sure they would do me good if I persevered.

"I followed carefully all the directions, and at the end of ten days I was able to crawl down stairs. I persevered with the Beans and my strength seemed to come back to me. My appetite also returned, and I was soon able to take many things I dared not touch before. I still went on with the medicine until cured. I have now no longer the fear of the fits, and I have benefited in every possible way. I have increased in weight, have regained my sight, my memory, and my hearing. The strange noises in my head, the wind, dizziness, the weakness, and all the other distressing symptoms of my case have, after these long years, completely given place to health, strength, and renewed vitality. For this I have Chas. Forde's Bile Beans alone to thank, and I never tire of recommending them to my friends."

Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness may be obtained from any chemist, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co.'s Head English Depot, 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, 1/1½ or 2/9. (2/9 box contains 3 times 1/1½ size.) Bile Beans are sold only in sealed boxes, never loose.

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We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. To those readers who submit storyettes which are used, a six shilling novel will be awarded. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, February 10th. Post-cards only, please.

Take it Now.

HOTEL WAITER: "Shall I take your order now, missy, or will you wait till your mamma comes in?" Little Girl: "I wish you'd take it now. Mamma never orders anything 'cept what's good for me."

How Nice for Hubby!

BRIDE (after return from honeymoon); "I see by this medical work that a man requires eight hours' sleep and a woman ten." Bridegroom: "Yes, I've read that somewhere myself." Bride: "How nice. You can get up every morning, and have the fire made and the breakfast ready before it is time for me to get up."

It Makes No Difference.

"I SUPPOSE you don't believe in courtship," said the paragraphist laughingly to the manager of the gas company. "Why not?" asked the manager. "Because lovers always turn the gas down, you know. Ha! ha! ha!" "Oh, that makes no difference," said the manager. "The meter gets in its work all the same."

Waiting for Each Other.

"GABRIEL," said the doctor's wife, "have you settled yet with Lawyer Sharp for conducting that case for you in court last year?" "No," said the doctor. "It was about that time, you remember, that I performed an operation on him, and I want to know what his bill is before I make out mine. I suppose he's waiting for the same reason."

An Ambitious Boy.

LITTLE BOY: "Papa, may I study elocution?" Proud Papa: "Indeed you may, my boy, if you wish. You desire to become a great orator, don't you?" "Yes, that's it." "And some day, perhaps, have your voice ringing through the halls of Westminster?" "I shouldn't care for that. I want to be an after-dinner speaker." "Ah, you are ambitious for social distinctions, then?" "No, I want the dinners."

One on the Landlady.

THE landlady was in a sentimental mood. "This is the anniversary of the death of my poor dear old Uncle John," she sighed. "He was a sea-captain and went down with his ship this day five and thirty years ago. I was only a child when he went away, but I remember he gave me a pet lamb as a parting gift." "And you've killed it at last!" said the star boarder reproachfully, picking up a piece of mutton on his fork and regarding it with mournful interest.

A Reasonable Conclusion.

LITTLE DOT: "Mamma is going to take me with her when she visits Aunt Jenny." Little Dick: "She goin' to take me, too." "Did she say so?" "No." "Then how do you know?" "She'll never leave me here with that cupboard full of jam."

Took it as an Insult.

A MANCHESTER firm that has recently introduced a typewriter into their correspondence department received a letter from an indignant customer the other day, saying: "I want you to understand that you needn't print letters sent to me. I can read writing—even yours—and I don't want to be insulted by reflections on my education."

A Check on the Post-Office.

AN old woman living near Pitlochry, N.B., drew her money out of the post-office savings-bank the other day. Having been paid the sum standing in her name, she took it to the corner of the post-office, laboriously counted it several times, and then, returning to the counter, handed if back again, saying: "Take it, mon, and go on keeping it. I only wanted to see if it was a'richt."

The Merchant's Test.

A PARISIAN merchant, who has been several times robbed by unfaithful cashiers, has invented an infallible test of competency. The cashier presents himself, offers his services, shows his references. Then the merchant says: "Show me how you could erase a mistake in your figures." The aspiring cashier sets to work with scraper, ink-eraser, and what not, and, if he succeeds in destroying all trace of the erasure, he is invited to take his hat and leave.

He Wanted it Repeated.

TEACHER: "Boys, I would like to impress upon your young minds the necessity of forgiving and forgetting. Forgive the injury your companions may have done you, and forget the feelings of revenge that have filled your hearts." Small Boy (whispering to teacher): "Teacher, won't you please say that over again? Jimmie Pease says he's going to wollop me within an inch of my life after school, and I want him to forget all about it, 'cos he's too big for me."

A Talented House Agent.

MRS. HOMESEEKER: "You certainly don't expect anybody to take this house? Why, the floors all run down-hill." Agent (a smart man): "It was built in that way on purpose, mum, to keep peace in the family. Greatest invention of the age, mum." Mrs. Homeseeker: "Keep peace in the family? What do you mean?" Agent: "It's all right, mum—nothing like it. Whenever your husband drops his collar-studs they'll roll down to that wall, and he'll always know where to find 'em."

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are, send a specimen of your handwriting to

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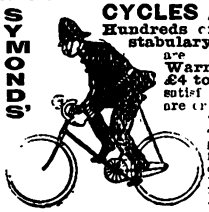

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"TATCHO"

THE GREAT HAIR RENEWER.

WHAT PEOPLE THEMSELVES ARE SAYING:

"A PEARL BEYOND PRICE."—35 Aberdeen Road, Cotham, Bristol. December 23rd, 1901. Mrs. E. C. Parsons regards "Tatcho" as a pearl beyond price. In her opinion everybody desiring to cultivate, improve, or retain a good head of hair should try it.

"3 SEPARATE HAIRDRESSERS."—Rostherne, St. Stephen's Road, Bournemouth, November 30th, 1901. Mrs. Lloyd wants to give three bottles of "Tatcho" to some friends here, as a lady in the house is strongly recommending it, and says that three separate hairdressers tell her what a wonderful growth of new hair she has.

"A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY."—Lyss Place, Liss, Hants, November 30th, 1901. I find "Tatcho" almost excellent and pleasing application for the hair; in fact, a wonderful discovery which ought to be very widely known.—H. PELHAM PAPILLON.

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If your Chemist has not KAPUTINE send his name and address to C.G. KAPUTINE, HUDDERSFIELD and we will send you SAMPLES FREE.

WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.—MADGE MORRIS.]

A brave little girl is "Elsie." She is only thirteen years old, and yet looks after the house for her father, and has entire charge of three little children. She writes to ask me what she can do to prevent the little boy from tearing his clothes, and falling down in the mud. Never mind the mud, "Elsie," one day's dirt never did a child any harm. Little legs are apt to be unsteady at four years old, and boys will be boys. Certainly you are old enough to be one of my friends.

"Grannie" writes to say that she would like to know of a seaside place which will suit her daughter, who has a delicate chest. She is fond of a certain amount of gaiety, and does not care about going abroad?——The best I know of, "Grannie," is Bournemouth. It is on the south coast, and the air and the smell of the pine trees are especially good for the chest. There is always plenty going on in the Winter Gardens and elsewhere. Thank you for your cheery letter and good wishes.

"A Girl Wife" asks what is the reason that she feels so awkward and ill at ease whenever her husband brings any friends of his into tea or supper. She feels ready to cry, and, for the life of her cannot think of anything to say, and it vexes her husband more than a little. It is a very common type of nervousness, "Girl Wife."——Try and think less about your feelings, and remember that you, as hostess, should be the one to try and put your visitors at their ease. In time you will get over it, and forget that you ever were so shy.

"Sailor's Lass" is in doubt as to which of two men she should keep company with: the sailor lad who is short-tempered, or the country lad who is reckless. The sailor lad has been keeping company with her for seven months, and last week the other came to see if she would keep company with him. His companions give him a bad name, so she does not know what to do.——From the tone of your letter, "Sailor's Lass," I should say the sailor is the one you love the better, and if so, I should stick to him. Tell the country lad that he must not keep coming to see you, as you are keeping company with the sailor.

"Darby and Joan" write me a joint letter and this is what they say: "We are the happiest couple alive, and yet both of us are dreading the hour when one shall be called to rest and so leave the other alone! We are eighty-three years old."——I quite understand your feeling anxious, "Darby and Joan," but you say you are the happiest couple alive, and surely this is something to be very thankful for. When the call comes, I am sure the one left will have hope and faith enough to feel that the other is waiting with hands outstretched in welcome. So try and forget all but this! Life is so short that it should be happy, and if possible free from care.

"Daisy Bell" asks me what I must confess is a very silly question. "I love a young man deeply," she says, "but I have only seen him once. He is tall and dark, and has a lovely drooping moustache. How can I get to know him, and is he the man I shall marry?" Now, "Daisy Bell," how *do* you suppose I should know whom you are going to marry? As to "loving a man deeply" whom you have only seen once, that is utter nonsense. Fifteen is far too young for you to be thinking about love at all, so forget all about him, and in years to came you may meet with some man who will take a fancy to you and make you happy.

"F. H. T." says: "I have two girls, one in England and one in America; the one in England is very jealous even if I kiss her married sister, and I have had a quarrel with her. The American never quarrels with me, is not jealous, and loves me more. Which one shall I be engaged to?"——From what you tell me, "F. H. T.," I should certainly advise you to get engaged to the American girl, but, at the same time, remember to be jealous shows that the English girl loves you too. America is a long way off, but a girl who is not jealous is seldom met with, so I think you would be happiest if engaged to her. Jealousy is the ruin of many a happy home.

"Mrs. X.," a lady who has never touched an intoxicant, hears that Mrs. Z has told a certain person that she drinks. How can this slander be refuted?——Get the person to whom the untruth was told to invite the slanderer to his or her house on a certain day. Arrange to call in yourself at the same time. In a tactful way tell the other lady that you have heard that a certain statement has been circulated about you, and ask on what authority. If the thing is pure invention, then you will have brought her to book in a more effectual way than by unpleasant legal measures. If the lady in question is clearly proved to have been malicious, then you are justified in terminating the acquaintance.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 37—42," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 17th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 37. CHARADE.

My FIRST for wit was justly famed—
A well-known English poet:
My NEXT we do from morn till eve,
Yet never seem to know it.
My WHOLE, an effort to disguise,
Will not deceive the truly wise.

No. 38. ACROSTIC.

The initials of the following read downwards will form the name of a vegetable:

A famous town in France. A river in England. A town in the North of England. A lake in Asia. A river in Germany. A mountain in Asia. A city in Scotland. A historic town in India. A river in Africa.

No. 39. SQUARE WORD.

Part of the Solar system. To love. A bird. An endeavour. A man's name.

No. 40. BEHEADED WORDS.

1. I am to reside, behead me I am a spring.
2. I am to punish, behead me I am part of the body.
3. I am to fascinate, behead me I am to injure, behead me again and I am a part of the body.
4. I am a nut, behead me and I am to granulate.
5. I am to pull suddenly, behead me I am to charm, behead me again I am to irritate.
7. I am to educate, behead me I am water.
8. I am an instant, behead me I am a grain, behead me again I am used on cakes.
9. I am of little importance, behead me I am of great importance to soldiers.

No. 41. ENIGMA.

You will find me in the river,
Though I am not in the sea;
And I occupy a quiver,
But an arrow cannot be.
In the vineyard you may find me,
Yet I do not know the grape;
Common string will quickly bind me
Though I conquer cords and tape.
Ne'er a singer does without me,
Yet I never knew a song;
Mariners know all about me,
For to ships I must belong;
You might search in vain the ocean,
But you'll never find me there;
Still, I guide its every motion,
And completely fill the air.
If you're seeking wealth and pleasure,
Don't neglect me or you'll fail;
Can you guess the hidden treasure
Wrapped in this little tale?

No. 42. SENTENCE MAKING.

From the following words form a sentence:

Julie he more spite with an think he stopped the kindly branch you made in twisting I'd for just held nervous voice his strength little shake in all that of me with a then finished instant of a I hoped.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 19 to 24.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Miss H. M. Richmond, of 31 South Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, whose attempt was first to hand of those most correct.

A book has been sent to each of the following:

E. Wilson, 2 Orchard Villas, London Road, Ashford, Middlesex; Miss N. Rankmore, Golden Hill, Wiveliscombe, Somerset; W. Martin, 8 Drum Terrace, Leith; G. Humphreys, 19 Colville Street, Nottingham; D. S. Hill, West View, Knowle; J. D. Watts, 5 Nicholas Lane, E.C.; Miss E. M. Corbett, Ivy Hatch, Sevenoaks; Miss Wallbridge, 34 Montpelier Road, Peckham; Miss K. Brock, High Street, Botley, Hants; Mrs. J. H. Heeley, 12 Beaconsfield Road, Seaforth, Liverpool.

SOLUTIONS.

19. Then—hen.
Stone—tone—one.
Scold—cold—old.
Shovel—hovel.
Kill—ill.

20. ENTER.
NERVE.
TREES.
EVENT.
RESTS.

21. T hames.
A gra.
B erne.
L iverpool.
E ms.
T ralee.
E dinburgh.
N ova Scotia.
N orthumberland.
I taly.
S inai.

22. Sydney. Constance. Thorn. Fear. Small, Sandwiches. Sky(e). Black. Cloudy. Hunter. Deer Race.

23. The letter A.

24. Hit—her—to. Hitherto.

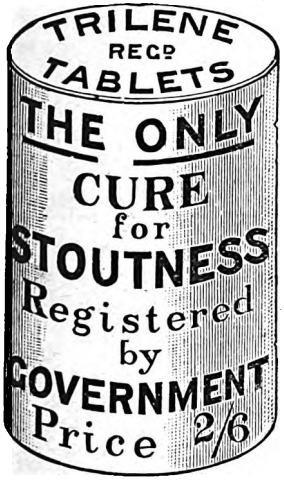
A Splendid new Serial by Louis Tracy starts on March 1st. Order a copy of SHORT STORIES to be reserved for you.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

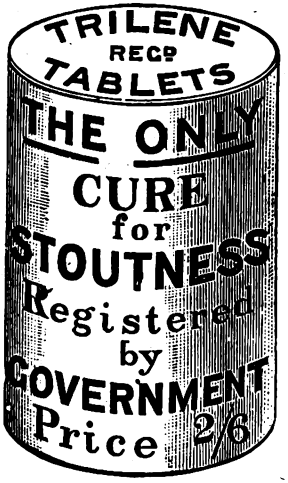
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 13st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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SIX PRIZE-MEDAL WATCHES.

These are the most perfectly constructed Watches ever offered to the public, being fitted with a horizontal escapement, every part being interchangeable, all wheels being made of specially-prepared metal, well gilt, polished steel pinions, hardened and tempered springs, patent winding work, patent regulator to keep hair-spring in position, to withstand rough work.

GENTS' or LADY'S { SILVER KEYWIND ... 30/- GOLD ,, ... 126/- SILVER KEYLESS ... 42/- GOLD ,, 84/- & 126/-

Silver Watches, 5/- Monthly. Gold Watches, 21/- Monthly.

Parents wishing to present their Sons or Daughters with a **Good Watch**, or young men or young women wishing to buy a Good Watch—one that will keep time and last for **20 years**—should buy one of **MASTERS'** 6 PRIZE-MEDAL WATCHES. MASTERS Ltd. have sold thousands, and received thousands of testimonials. Send 5/- deposit (and pay 5/- monthly), and either Silver Watch will be sent **FREE** on approval, or either Gold Watch for 21/- deposit (and 21/- month'y). Month'y payments accepted for Watches, Jewellery, Rings, &c. Send for Catalogue and terms. **But** if you send CASH IN FULL we make you a **present** value 2/- in the £; thus with a 30/- Silver Watch we **give** you a Silver Albert (or any other article value 3/-) as a **FREE GIFT** for Cash.

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THE HOUSE-KEEPER'S PARCEL. 50 PIECES.

Comprising 6 Table Knives, 6 Dessert Knives, 6 Table Forks, 6 Dessert Forks, 2 Table Spoons, 6 Dessert Spoons, 6 Tea Spoons, 1 Pair Sugar Tongs, 1 Sugar Sifter, 6 Egg Spoons, 2 Salt Spoons, and 2 Mustard Spoons. Packed complete in strong metal-edged box, and sent post free to any part of the world for 25/-, with **FREE GIFT** of a pair of handsome Button-hole Scissors to cash purchasers, or supplied to any reader on monthly payments. Send 5/- deposit, and 5/- monthly. Parcel is sent you by return, and if you do not approve of it your Cash will be returned in full. Teapots, Cruets, Liquor Frames, Toast Racks, &c., supplied on similar terms.

SEE OUR LARGE **CATALOGUE**, containing 1,500 illustrations of WATCHES, CLOCKS, CUTLERY, PLATE, &c., POST FREE.

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AGENTS WANTED. Write for full Particulars of Commission. POST FREE.

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BRITISH MANUFACTURE. **THE ORIGINAL** MAKES FOOD DIGESTIBLE.

PURE. WRIGHT, CROSSLEY & CO., LIVERPOOL. BEST.

May be obtained from all Underclothing Houses and Chemists.

2 doz. No. 1 at 1/-;
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Post Free.

LADIES SAY THAT THE "Mene" SANITARY TOWELS

ARE SUPERIOR TO ALL OTHER MAKES. FOR CLEANLINESS, COMFORT, AND ECONOMY.

A FREE SAMPLE To any Lady naming this Paper.

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No. 685.) For Week Ending February 15th, 1902. (One Penny.

SHORT STORIES

Chickering] [Boston.

"Oh, dear! I couldn't get last week's
SHORT STORIES.
(Look out for my face next week.)

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WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER

IS CHEAP, GOOD, EFFECTIVE. The Best Soap for all purposes. It Saves Time, Labour, Money. Has the Largest Sale of 1-lb. Tablets in the World.

BIG PRIZE SCHEME

For OCTOBER, 1902.

38,199 Prizes value £15,362

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize, £100 ...	£100	0
1	Cash Prize, £75	75	0
1	Cash Prize, £50	50	0
1	Cash Prize, £45	45	0
5	Pianos (Walnut Cases), £40 each	200	0
10	Gents' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Cash Prizes, £10 each ...	100	0
20	Jones's Sewing Machines, £8 each.	160	0
20	Cases Cutlery, £8 each ...	160	0
20	Cash Prizes, £5 each ...	100	0
100	Dinner Services (56 pieces), £2 10s. each...	250	0
100	Gold Filled Gents' Watches, £2 10s. each ...	250	0
100	Ladies' Dressing Bags, £2 5s. each	225	0
100	Handsome Timepieces, £2 5s. each	225	0
100	Cash Prizes, £2 each ...	200	0
300	Ladies' Travelling Trunks, £2 each	600	0
300	Fancy Bed Quilts, £1 10s. each	450	0
1000	pairs Blankets, £1 per pair	1000	0
500	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered, £1 each... ...	500	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- ea.	750	0
1000	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. ea.	750	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, large, 15s. per ½-doz.	300	0
1000	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	750	0
1000	Ladies' Rolled Gold Bracelets, 15s. each ...	£750	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, small, 14s. per ½-doz.	280	0
1000	pairs of Bed Sheets, 12 6 per pair	625	0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths, 12 6 each	625	0
500	Cash Prizes, 10s. each ...	250	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, large, 8s. per ½-doz.	450	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, small, 8s. per ½-doz.	400	0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses, 8s. each	400	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7s. 6d. each	375	0
1000	Ladies' Serge Dress Lengths, 7s. 6d. each ...	375	0
1000	½-doz. Teaspoons (Best Electro-plated), 5s. per ½-doz.	250	0
4000	Ladies' Chatelaine Bags, 5s. each	1000	0
200	Children's Tea Sets, 3s. 6d. each	35	0
6000	½-doz. Ladies' Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs, 2s. 6d. ½-doz.	750	0
4000	Brushes and Combs, in cases, 2s. each	400	0
4000	Oval Hand Mirrors, 2s. each	400	0
4000	Photo Frames, 2s. each ...	400	0
38,199		**£15,362**	**0**

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive wrappers. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest numbers of wrappers of either soap or both of them combined to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds,** not later than October 31st, 1902. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of the sender, and the number of wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write legibly "**Prize Competition.**" A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. Should any dispute arise as to the contents of any parcel, or any other matter connected with this competition, the decision of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Leeds, to be final. All prizes will be despatched on or before December 20th, 1902.

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BEST AND SAFEST DISINFECTANT. For Use in Kitchen, Laundry, Bathroom, and Nursery. Purifies Everyt ing. Kills Infection. Wards off Illness. Saves Doctors' Bills.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS:

EPPS'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

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50/- 50/-

"PERFECTA" Lady's 14 carat Gold Watch.

Decorated Gold or Opal Dial, Keyless or Key-winding, Jewelled Movement, Handsomely Engraved Gold Cases.

Send 5s. with order, and the watch will be forwarded to you; if satisfied, complete the purchase in nine more monthly payments of 5s. each; or, if you prefer to send the balance in one sum within seven days, a Handsome Present will be forwarded to you as Discount. If you have the *slightest* cause for dissatisfaction, return the watch, and your deposit will be at once refunded in full.

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 685.] For the Week Ending February 15th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

New Series. **Start To-day.**

EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

I.—THE WALLINGTON SUCCESSION.

EDWARD FARRELL drew his chair a little nearer to the bench upon which stood the beaker, the boiling contents of which he was watching.

His laboratory was a fairly large one, and was equipped in the most complete manner.

The shelves were crowded with chemicals and unguents, and on every hand were to be seen the most up-to-date apparatus and instruments.

It was a laboratory that must have filled less favoured scientists with envy, and Edward Farrell was its king—and he, the king, loved and worshipped his little kingdom.

One might almost say of Farrell that he was a chemist first, and a man after—almost, but not quite.

Now Farrell was not old or grey, neither had he the scholarly stoop one is so apt to associate with wide learning.

Yet his was a name known and honoured among scientists—a name that carried its own patent of nobility to those who were most advanced in the intellectual life of the century.

He was to the casual observer just a good average specimen of our best British manhood—well-built, muscular, and pleasant.

To those, however, who cared to observe him more closely, the steady blue eyes, the fine mouth, and the fine development of forehead told of a man of keen insight, of noble purpose, and of indomitable will.

He was about thirty years of age, and from his childhood had always been passionately fond of science. He had studied under Bunsen and Haffman in Germany, and when two years previously he had become heir to a fine fortune, he had established his present laboratory in the West-end of London. Nothing that money could buy was wanting, and with this splendid equipment at his disposal, he conducted his researches and took a keen interest in any outside practice that seemed likely to yield him interest or experience.

Farrell rose and gave the contents of the beaker he was watching a swirl, held it to the light and examined it critically, and then, with a sigh of comfortable satisfaction, as he listened to the storm without, sank back into his chair.

It was indeed a wild night. The wind howled and raged among the chimneys as though it were paying off some old and cherished score, while the rain pattered in strong gusts against the windows, and made Farrell thankful that he was well out of its reach.

"At any rate," he said, "I shall get a little quiet work this evening, for no one will bother me such a wretched night as this."

Almost as soon as the unconsciously spoken words had left his lips, however, a jingle of a hansom was heard in the street below, and a minute later, Mrs. Cook, his housekeeper, knocked at the laboratory door, and announced "Mr. Varley," a tall, good-looking young fellow of about twenty-five, who followed her closely up the stairs.

"Well, Farrell, old fellow! I am glad to find you in," the newcomer said, in a tone of unmistakable relief. "Can you spare me half-an-hour or so now, and—well, after that we'll see."

Farrell glanced reluctantly at his beaker.

"It's rather hard lines," he laughingly said, "just as I had been congratulating myself on the fine evening's work I was going to do. However," as he saw the anxious look on the other's face, "I suppose I must

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humour you. There you are! Out goes the gas, and now let us adjourn to the 'den' and have a smoke."

"Well!" said Farrell, when they were comfortably seated in the cosy sitting-room he called his "den," "Now let's listen to your tale of woe."

Fred Varley sat thinking for a minute, then he said:

"Of course you have heard of the Wallington succession?"

"Yes. A most lamentable affair," answered Farrell; "and by-the-way, they were close relatives of yours, how stupid of me to forget—that is why you are looking so worried. My dear fellow, I am awfully sorry for you!"

"Well, Farrell, to tell you the truth, it is about this unhappy business I have come to speak to you. Two months ago my uncle, Sir Edward Wallington, was as hale and hearty as either you or I at the present moment.

"Full of vigour, taking a keen interest in all around him, possessed of a splendid estate, and an unimpaired fortune, one could safely have predicted that he had the best of his life before him.

"Yet within three weeks comes a startlingly rapid, and quite unaccountable breakdown in his health, and he suddenly dies—as the doctors all agree—of heart disease.

"It seems so unaccountable, because, to my certain knowledge, he had never in his life before had the slightest indication of any heart trouble.

"This, however, would not in itself have seemed so strange but for what followed.

"My cousin, Captain Wallington, my uncle's next of kin, went down to Wallington Hall to settle my uncle's affairs and take possession of his heritage; and now he, too, is dead, and the same strange breakdown and failure of the heart that carried off my uncle have been the cause of his death.

"I am next in the succession, and now heir to the estate. I suppose I ought to consider myself a fortunate man, yet I can assure you, Farrell, when I received the letter from the solicitors asking me to go down and take possession, it was like receiving my death warrant.

"I am not a superstitious man, and yet I would give much to find a decent excuse to keep away.

"It may be very silly, and probably is nothing but fancy; yet there the fact remains. However, I don't intend to shirk my duty, much as I should like to do so.

"I intend to face the music; and the long and the short of the whole matter is—I want you to go with me!

"You know, Farrell," young Varley continued appealingly, "you used to be my 'guardian angel in trousers' at school, and you surely cannot find it in your heart to refuse me now—even if you would?"

Farrell had been looking thoughtfully into the fire during the whole of Varley's recital, and now appeared to rouse himself with an effort from the train of thought into which he had fallen.

"Tell me, Varley—did you see your uncle and cousin after they were dead?" he said, apparently ignoring Varley's last appeal.

"Yes."

"Well, did you notice anything at all striking about them. I mean beyond what you would expect to see in a dead body?"

"No, I can't say that I did. You see I have seen so few dead bodies that I can hardly judge. Their eyes looked rather prominent, I thought, and rather dark—although not very noticeably so—and even that may be my fancy, for I did not look closely at them—or at anything else, for the matter of that," and Varley shuddered.

"Did they both die at Wallington Hall?"

"Yes. In the same room, I think."

"Ha! Who succeeds you if you die without issue?"

"The estate reverts to a distant branch of the family represented now by my cousin—Dr. Elyss."

"Did he attend your uncle or cousin professionally?"

"No. He was only called in to consult when death seemed inevitable. He lives at Banford, a few miles from Wallington, and troubles very little about a 'practice,' for he has a very decent fortune I believe. In fact, he spends as much of his time at the Hall as anywhere. But, hang it all, old fellow, why all this cross-questioning—you haven't answered me yet. Say you'll come, and then you'll see things for yourself."

"Just a little patience and one more question, my impetuous young man, and then I have done. Has your cousin, Dr. Elyss, ever been in India?"

"Yes. He took a fancy to go to Bombay to study the plague, and then wandered up country for some time before returning home; but will you come, Farrell? For goodness' sake don't sit there calmly asking questions, when I am just burning with impatience. Now *will* you come?"

Surely there was a tone of suppressed excitement in Farrell's voice as he answered his friend. Yet Farrell was not easily moved.

"Yes, Varley, I'll come, with all my heart; only don't mention your suspicions to anyone—all depends on that."

"Then you think there has been foul play, Farrell?" cried Varley excitedly. "Tell me! What do you think it was—whom do you suspect?"

"All in good time," replied Farrell quietly. "I can say nothing yet, for I know nothing. Now just listen to me, and when I have had my say, I should be greatly obliged if you would 'clear out' and leave me to my thoughts. All right — no thanks — but just listen. You may expect me at Wallington three days after you arrive—that will be Thursday. Meet me at the station yourself, and only speak of me as a casual friend.

"Remember, don't mention your suspicions to

Farrell entered, carrying a bulls-eye lantern in one hand.

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anyone—more depends on that than anything; have my room next to yours if you can, and in the meantime keep you eyes open and your mouth shut. And now, my dear fellow—good-bye!"

As the jingle of Varley's cab was lost in the driving storm without, Farrell took an old ragged book tenderly from his bookcase. Then he sat quietly reading and musing before the fire, but there was a terribly grim look upon his face.

* * * * *

"Thank Heaven, you've come, Farrell!" said Varley, as they climbed up into the trap and went bowling along towards Wallington Hall.

It was Thursday. Varley looked white and shaken; and when Farrell saw him, his lips tightened and the stern look in his eyes deepened.

Varley broke the silence again.

"The place is bewitched, Farrell, I tell you. Last night I woke as from a nightmare, gasping for breath, with beads of perspiration on my brow, and a horrible frightened feeling all over me.

"There was no one in the room, I'll swear, for I had carefully locked the door, and yet there was that awful uncanny feeling all around. I was like a ghost when I looked into the glass this morning, and I've been on the shake ever since.

"Every one tells me how queer I look; and Elyss even laughingly threatens to send round old Doctor Jones to see me.

"It's terrible, Farrell. I feel just an arrant coward. The place is bewitched, or haunted, or something!" and the poor fellow looked up piteously at the scientist seated beside him.

Farrell was moved, but he only said:

"Have you arranged the bedrooms as I asked, Varley?"

"Yes," answered he, "yours is opposite mine, and our two are the only ones occupied on that floor just now. The servants are in another wing; young Stanley, who is staying with us, and Doctor Elyss are sleeping under us, so that we are quite alone. I wish that you would turn in with me to-night, though, Farrell. I am as nervous as a kitten?"

He tried to carry off his request with a laugh, but failed miserably.

"I fully intend to be with you, Varley," answered Farrell, "*only* no one must know it. Leave your door unlocked, and half-an-hour afterwards I will join you. Don't undress, but lie down as you are and wait for me.

"Then I think—— What! is that the Hall? What a fine place—and that is young Stanley and Doctor Elyss, is it? Well, you can climb down and introduce me. How do you do, Doctor Elyss? Pleased to meet you. What do you say, Varley? I shall be late for dinner if I stand chattering here? What an unpardonable offence! Excuse me, gentlemen, I must run off and dress, or else I shall incur your everlasting displeasure."

What a change had come over him! Could this laughing, breezy, jovial society man be the same grim-looking, serious Edward Farrell of two minutes before!

Yet, throughout the evening it was the same. He was the life and soul of the party; and when they retired for the night young Stanley mentally decided that "he was a jolly decent fellow, don't you know!" Even Elyss remarked to Varley that Farrell wasn't half a bad sort, only 'there was a good deal of ffoth' about him."

Varley himself was filled with astonishment, and as he closed his room door, he wondered how much help he was to expect from such a light-hearted and frivolous individual as Farrell. Yet he carried out Farrell's instructions to the letter, and after what seemed a dozen hours to the anxious watcher, the door of the room crept slowly open, and Farrell entered. He had a small, partially-shaded bull's-eye lantern in one hand, and what appeared to be a gladstone bag in the other.

He whispered quietly across the darkness of the room to Varley, and told him to sit still on the bed—made sure that the blinds were closely drawn, locked the door, and then commenced quietly and cautiously to unpack his bag by the dim light of the lantern.

Varley watched all his movements with speechless wonder. What could it all mean? but his first whispered inquiry was met by a stern, low "Hush!" from Farrell.

Farrell first took from the bag two cases with back straps, that looked in the flickering darkness for all the world like the wallets worn by tourists, only from the top came a small flexible tube ending in a funnel-shaped mouthpiece.

One he fastened deftly on his own back, and the other on Varley's.

"When I give you the signal," he whispered, "fasten the funnel over your mouth with this india-rubber band and draw your breath through the apparatus."

Next he took from the bag a packet of white blotting-paper strips and a bottle containing some solution.

He carefully soaked each strip in the solution and then commenced to hang them about the room.

One he pinned just above the key-hole, another on the hangings at the head of the bed, another on the curtains, four on the floor at different places, and yet another near the ceiling.

This finished, he looked at his watch, it wanted ten minutes to two; he darkened his lantern and softly crept to the bed and sat down in the darkness at Varley's side.

Varley sat still on the bed.

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Varley shuddered as the light disappeared. What were they to expect? How black and creepy the darkness seemed!

What did all this mysterious preparation mean? What were they waiting for?

He could have shrieked aloud.

The long minutes crept by and no sound save their own breathing broke the deadly stillness of the night.

Then somewhere a distant clock struck two.

Farrell turned up his lantern and crept round the room. He threw a pencil of light on every strip in turn; but whatever he expected to find, he was apparently disappointed, for he darkened his light again, and again crept noiselessly to Varley's side.

To Varley the next ten minutes seemed like so many hours. Would nothing happen? Anything rather than such intolerable suspense.

Once, from somewhere in the house, came an unmistakable "click," then all was silent once more.

Again, after a further pause, Farrell crept round to his strips.

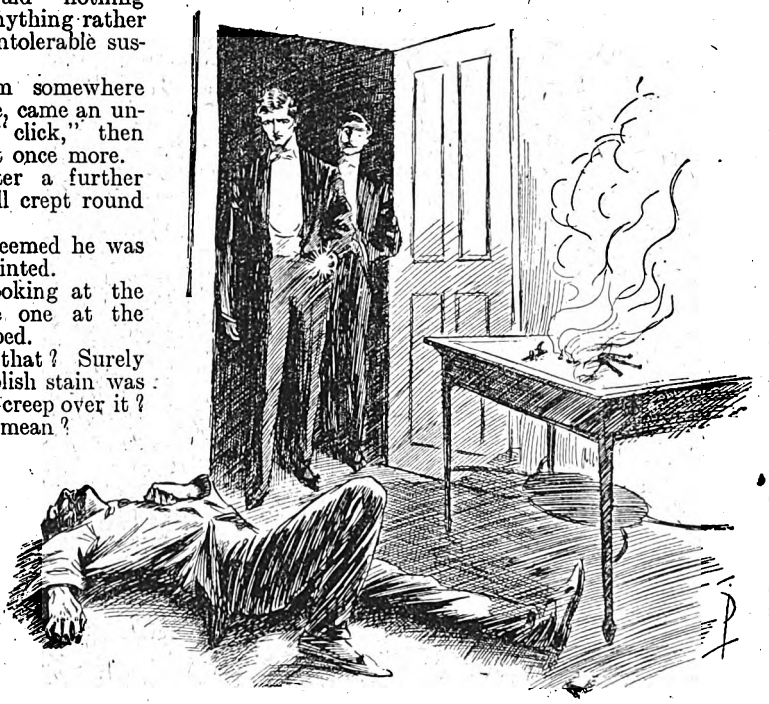
Again it seemed he was to be disappointed.

He was looking at the last one—the one at the head of the bed.

What was that? Surely a faint, purplish stain was beginning to creep over it? What can it mean?

The effect on Farrell was electric: his eyes sparkled, he looked an enthusiast.

"Quick, Varley!" he whispered, "on with your respirator!" and he himself set the example by fastening his funnel over his mouth.



On the ground at the side of the table lay the figure of a man.

Then with a penknife he quickly, but still with caution, cut down the curtain and revealed the wall behind. As the beam of light flashed over its surface—low down, near the pillow—it lit on what looked like a piece of old lead gas-piping projecting about an eighth of an inch from the wall.

Farrell put his hand before it; then seized Varley's and held it there too.

What could it mean? A slow stream of gas or vapour of some sort was issuing from it. Surely there was no gas in that old country house.

Besides, it was distinctly warm.

Varley looked questioningly to Farrell, but he had darted across the dark room to his bag.

He returned with a tiny rubber stopper in his hand, and quickly jammed it into the pipe.

His face was stern—suppressed excitement gleamed from his eyes—and as the dim reflected light of the lantern shone on him, he looked a weird and terrible figure.

He held the stopper tightly in the tube and was listening intently. How their hearts beat! How dark and silent everything seemed! What was happening? Why did Farrell look so anxious?

The seconds crept by—ten—twelve—how they dragged. Hark! What was that?

Downstairs somewhere there was a sharp "pop," like the opening of a ginger-beer bottle. Then a most unearthly shriek of agony rang out through the silent house and died away in a gasping wail.

Then a low thud; and after there was a silence which was as dead as of the grave.

Farrell seemed to have been expecting something of the sort, for he now left the pipe, rushed to the window and opened it wide.

"Downstairs after me, Varley, as fast as you can!" he said, removing the funnel from his mouth for a moment, "and be sure and use your respirator!"

Out into the corridor they rushed, and down the stairs.

Varley's heart was in his mouth, for he knew not what dread thing to expect.

Farrell was as cool and firm as if he were in his own loved laboratory, but then he *knew* and knowledge drives away fear.

From under one of the doors on the next landing a lurid light showed.

Farrell tried the door, It was locked. He seemed to expect as much, and stepping back a pace or two, he crashed it open with his shoulder.

As the door swung backwards a scene was revealed that Varley will remember to his dying day.

On a writing-table at the side of the room the fragments of a broken flask were lying; a spirit lamp, burning under the tripod that had supported the flask, had set fire to its spilt contents, and these in turn had fired the table cover.

From the broken neck of the flask a tube ran to the wall and disappeared near the ceiling.

On the ground at the side of the table lay the figure of a man dressed in pyjamas; blood was streaming from his face, but it was nevertheless easily recognisable—it was the face of Doctor Elyss.

Farrell sprang to the table and smothered the flames; flung the window wide open; and then came and carefully examined the senseless man.

After a brief examination he arose, removed his respirator, and said:

"I don't think he'll cheat the gallows after all, Varley.

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You can take off your funnel now, the room is pretty well clear. You, Stanley"—for that youth had just appeared at the door with white face and quaking limbs—"you can send one of the servants for the police, and also the gardener to watch this fellow, when he comes to.

"Now what do you say to a smoke, Varley, till the inspector comes?"

* * * * *

"How do I explain it all? Easy enough! Your cousin and uncle each died very suspiciously. The symptoms were exactly those of an obscure Eastern poison, known, I suppose, to less than half-a-dozen people in Europe.

"The action of the poison it is quite impossible to detect, and the death of the victim appears quite natural to the unknowing medico.

"It is extremely volatile, and, as in your uncle's and cousin's cases, its action was spread over at least a fortnight—the only available time for its application seemed to be the night—and then only in diluted doses.

"What more easy than to project its vapour into the air of the sleeping chamber?

"Furthermore, the only country where the poison is more widely known is India.

"Hence my suspicions crystallised round Elyss. Once on the trail, it was easy to follow it up. Judicious inquiries revealed the fact that all Elyss' fortune had been lost by rash speculation, and he must have been well-night desperate.

"The rest you know. The respirators were filled with chemicals to purify our air so that we were not overcome by the poison before we could locate its inlet. The prepared test slips helped us to do that. Then when I stopped the tube the pressure accumulated in the thin flask in the murderer's room, and eventually burst in his face—overpowering and betraying him.

[Next Week: **"The Kirby Diamonds."**]

A is for Artists far-famed in all lands.
B is the Brushes they held in their hands.
C is their Colours which pass not or fade.
D is the Dainty Designs which they made.
E is the Easels their picture sustained.
F is the Fame which these artists have gained.
G is the Gold which their works might procure.
H is for Have—you may Have them, for sure—
I is for If—if only you're willing—
J is for Just—just to spend a mere shilling!
K is the Kudos the buyer will gain.
L is the Loss the non-buyer'll sustain.
M is the Money you'll save if you're wise.
N is for Nominal—such is the price.
O is the Offer—you've only to take it.
P is for Pearson's, the people who make it.
Q is for—Quickly your copy to get.
R is for—Run, or you'll lose it, you bet!
S is the Splendour of binding and print.
T is the Treasures of colour and tint.
U is for You whom to buy we enjoin.
V is the Value you get for your coin.
W's the Want which these pictures supply.
X the Unknown who are fearful to buy.
Y are they fearful? They're silly—that's why!
Z is—well, we'll leave it in order to tell you that the publication alluded to is entitle l,

"FAMOUS PICTURES OF THE WORLD,'

and is be ng published in shilling parts by

C. ARTHUR PEARSON, LIMITED.

PART I. is now on sale everywhere and contains nine facsimile reproductions of world-famed masterpieces by Titian, Greuze, Millais, Burne-Jones, Leader, and other well-known artists.

Couldn't Take it Back.

Proprietor: "What are you taking back there?" Waiter: "Customer sent this beefsteak back. Says he couldn't cut it." Proprietor (examining it): "Take it back to him and tell him he'll have to pay for it. We can never use it again; he has bent it out of shape."

That Altered It.

Doctor: "Yes; the symptoms are very serious. You must go to bed at once, and I will call and see you twice a day." Patient: "In that case it's lucky I joined the club last week." Doctor: "A club case! Good gracious! Why didn't you say so? Take a pennyworth of Epsom salts; you'll be all right to-morrow."

A New Metal-Polish.

The other day a lady discovered her servant girl trying to clean the fender with a copy of *Short Stories*. "Bridget!" exclaimed the astonished lady, "whatever are you doing with my paper? You know I only bought it this morning." "Oh!" replied Bridget, "you said that it always brightened you up, and so I am trying it on the fender."

He Didn't Pay.

An old Scotsman, not feeling well, called upon a doctor. The doctor gave him some verbal instructions as to how to regulate his diet, advising him among other things, to drink no spirits for a time. The Scotsman rose to leave, when the doctor said: "I am in the way of charging for my advice. I will trouble you for half-a-crown." "Oh, maybe," said the patient, "but I'm no gaun to tak' yer advice!"

An Army Contract.

Passing along Princes Street, Edinburgh, one day a herculean Scots Grey stopped at the post-office, and called on a street arab to polish his boots. The feet of the drag on were in proportion to his height, and looking at the tremendous boots before him, the arab knelt down on the pavement, and shouted out to his chum across the roadway: "Jamie, come ower an' gie's hand; I've got an army contract."

After the Opera.

Excited Auditor: "I declare, I never saw such wretchedly bad taste—such a scandalous violation of the dramatic unities—such an outrage on all sense of propriety!" Friend: "What's the matter, old man? Some of 'em been gagging again?" Excited Auditor: "Gagging isn't a circumstance to it. The opera was *William Tell*—a grand thing, you know—and just as the curtain rose on the scene displaying the hat of the tyrant Gesler on a pole, to which the hero refuses to bow, what does that wretched orchestra do but strike up 'Where did you get that hat?' Destroyed all the romantic illusion of the piece. Soulless brutes!"

The Worst Kind of Bargain.

A theatrical manager told a story against himself the other day. An actor came to him and applied for an engagement. There did not seem to be much need of him, but his demands in the way of salary were very modest, and the manager said to him: "Well, you may consider yourself engaged. I fancy I can find something for you to do." The newly-engaged man looked at the manager questioningly. "How about a contract," he asked. "Oh, never mind a contract. We'll have a verbal contract." There was a look of mild reproach in the eyes of the man as he answered sorrowfully: "Sir, the last time I made a verbal contract I drew a verbal salary."

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A Whistling Girl.

They carried him in from the surgeon's room and laid him on the narrow little bed that the nurse had made ready. Her eyes were wide, and her face was pale to the lips, but her step was steady and her manner calm as they withdrew and left her alone with him. A suppressed sob shook her frame as she lightly touched the bandages over his eyes, those honest grey eyes in which she had read nothing but loyalty and devotion. But Annie Morton was a trained nurse, and she forced down the rising tide of emotion and sat beside her patient, quietly waiting for him to regain consciousness. When he stirred, her hand was on his breast in an instant holding him steady.

"Only the nurse," she said, in a low even tone. "You are to remain perfectly quiet."

The meaning of her words came to him slowly as the effect of the anæsthetic wore off.

"Nurse," he suddenly asked, "why are my eyes bandaged?"

"They have been injured," she explained, "but we think not seriously. The only way to be sure that we shall save your sight is to keep the eyes bandaged for a time."

Her quiet manner subdued him, and he was silent, but only for a moment.

"Tell me first," he said, "have you seen my brother, Jim Curtis?"

A shudder ran through the girl. Yes, she had seen him stretched out in eternal quiet.

"All is well with him," she answered; "but you must be quiet now."

"He didn't see me until the last minute," went on the man, "and I had thought that he was a thousand miles away. We were fighting our way across the clearing when I saw a big fellow strike at a man just ahead of me. The man turned to parry the blow and I saw his face. It was Jim! I remember throwing myself between the fellow and my brother, but after that I don't remember anything."

"I know," she said. "A shell burst almost in front of your face. It was Captain Jim Curtis who led the men across that clearing. It was reckless work——"

"Yes, but that's Jim, though," said the man. "Why, he'd dare anything. How proud she'll be to hear of his courage in this affair! Nurse, couldn't he come in to see me?"

"No, not under any circumstances," was the decided answer. "You've talked too much now——"

"I'll be quiet, nurse, but won't you ask him to give me a whistle as he passes by? He has the prettiest whistle in the world. It's like a flute. Wait till you hear it!"

A swift rush of tears blinded the nurse. She was only a woman, and it meant much to her that the playmate of her childhood's days was even then being carried away to lie for ever silent in a soldier's grave.

"Ask him to whistle just once. He'll surely come to ask about me."

"I'll see about it," she answered at length, "if you think it will not excite you too much."

"Oh, nurse"—the big man's voice had grown tremulous—"I haven't heard that whistle for five years! You'd know what he is to me if you knew what I've given up for him."

The nurse caught her breath. "We'll see about it to-night when I go to make my report," she said. "Rest now, so that the report may be a good one."

The man obeyed. It was some time before he spoke again.

"I don't know why you should remind me of her," he said. "You're such a little, soft-voiced thing, and Annie is a big country girl, with a voice that makes the room ring when she laughs or sings. She does both, bless her! She can whistle, too, as well as any fellow I ever knew. Jim taught her, and I used to tease her about being a whistling girl."

A sad little smile passed over the face of the tall nurse as she bent above him to arrange the pillows.

"I must leave you now to make my report," she said. "Be very quiet, and I will not forget your message."

The man lay still, wondering how long the darkness would last. He felt lost, lying there alone, but suddenly through the stillness there came a clear high whistle, another and then a succession of bird calls. The man lay tingling with delight at the sounds.

"Jim!" he whispered. "God bless you, lad! Thank Heaven that I was with you in time!".

When the nurse came in again, she found him tranquilly smiling.

"He did whistle, nurse, the same merry old whistle. Couldn't you ask him for me how Annie is? Only that."

"I can't ask him anything," replied the girl, with forced calmness. "I shall not see him again."

The man sighed.

"Well, I won't trouble you, nurse. I'd like to know how she is, though. There isn't another woman in all the world like our whistling girl."

The nurse did not dare to speak.

"You're a stranger to me, nurse," he went on, "and yet I can't help telling you all about it. She lived near us all her life, but it wasn't till Jim came to me with his hopes that I realised what she was to me. I never told her. I could see that she and Jim were made for each other, but I couldn't stay there and tamely wait for the end. I——"

The man was trembling from head to foot, but the nurse had sunk down beside the bed and buried her face in the covers.

"I went away," he resumed, "and I haven't heard a word from them since. I hope she's happy. I'd like to ask Jim why he's here and not with her. But she has spirit and courage. She's not the one to bid him stay idle at home in these times. Nurse, was that a tear on my hand? There—I didn't make you cry, did I?"

The nurse choked back the tears and replied in her habitual half-voice:

"It was the lotion that I used for your bandages. No more talking to-night, please."

"No more, nurse; but you know now why I wished

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to hear Jim's whistle. To hear him is to know that he is safe and that no sorrow will come to Annie."

The whistle floated up to him each morning and evening at the hour that the nurse went to report.

The old airs that were familiar about his far-away home came to the patient listening in the darkened room. He grew stronger as the days went by, and the nurse watched him with dreamy happiness.

She had been away from him one morning, and when she returned she met the doctor at the door. He was talking with a friend, and as she stepped past him the words rang clearly into the quiet room.

"To replace Captain Jim Curtis, who was killed in that skirmish on the 18th."

"Who—was—what?" The patient had started up in bed, his face white with horror. The nurse sprang to him. He fell back as she reached him. He stiffened in her arms, and the blackness of despair settled down upon the heart and the hopes of the whistling girl.

The doctor's abrupt commands roused her. She was the nurse again, not the stricken woman. Together they worked to bring the patient back out of the shadow, and presently she was alone with him again.

"Nurse," he said, with a sob in his voice, "I suppose I must have been dreaming or may not be quite sane, but I'll swear I heard that whistle. It was Jim's signal, I know. But Jim is dead! Oh, Annie!"

The nurse was down on her knees beside him. Her strong, soft hands held him; her voice was steady and sweet.

"Listen, dear," she said. "Annie is—Annie is here! You couldn't know me while your eyes were bound, but, dear, you were more blind before. It was never Jim; it never could be. It was you then; it is you now. Oh, my love, you have lost much, but will you not be brave for my sake, for the sake of a day that may be?"

A light of understanding settled slowly upon his changing face. His hands closed tightly upon hers.

"Annie," he whispered, "is it a dream?"

The nurse laughed in spite of the tears that would flow.

"Oh, doubting one," she said, "how could this be a dream?" And light as an elf's caress, he felt her kiss upon his lips.

C. A. Canty.

The Happy Ending.

"And so, Mr. Mortimer, divested of all its flowery compliments, your letter means that you're not going to accept my story, does it?" observed Muriel Elliott reproachfully.

The editor of the *Empire Magazine* fidgeted uneasily in his chair.

"My dear Miss Elliott," he commenced hesitatingly, "I'm really very sorry indeed, but—er——"

"Yes, I've no doubt you are," was the answer. "Still, you're not half so sorry as I am. Ah, Mr. Mortimer!" she went on in a different voice; "after all you'd said about wanting to help me, I did count on your accepting my story. I wish you'd tell me why you're declining it, though. Don't you like it?"

"Oh, yes! I like it very much indeed," returned the other hastily, seizing, as it appeared to him, the chance of appeasing his visitor's anger.

"You like it very much indeed?" she echoed wonderingly. "Then, Mr. Mortimer, why on earth did you send it back again? Surely you are the editor of the *Empire Magazine*?"

"Now, look here, my young friend," he went on, taking up a manuscript from the pile of papers before him, "this is your story. You call it, I see, 'The Love that Lasts.' Now, that's not the very best title imaginable. Still, that scarcely matters; it's the treatment of your plot that I object to. You've worked it out in such a depressingly sad manner that it's quite useless for our pages. Readers of the *Empire* insist on having only lightness and brightness, or, at any rate, in all the stories having at least a 'happy ending.' Now, if you take the manuscript away and rewrite it so that it fulfils this necessary requirement, perhaps I might be able to use it later on."

"But the world is full of sad stories, Mr. Mortimer," protested the girl.

"Yes; and that's just why we don't want any of 'em in the pages of the *Empire Magazine*," was the answer.

At eight o'clock on the evening of the day on which she had had her interview with the editor of the *Empire Magazine*, Muriel Elliott sat down to try and give her rejected story the attraction suggested by Mr. Mortimer.

'How can Mr. Mortimer expect me to give a story like this a 'happy ending'?" she exclaimed tearfully, as she realised that her labour had been wasted.

"Whom do you blame then, Muriel?" demanded her sister, looking up inquiringly, in order to detect the cause of the outburst. "I suppose you do allow yourself the luxury of blaming some one?"

'Yes I do, May; I blame Dick Hilton, of course—and I'll blame you, too, if you take his part against me!" she added.

"Don't distress yourself about me, dear," laughed the elder girl. "I've got quite enough troubles of my own to smooth over, without worrying about yours. All the same, I believe it's far more your fault than Dick's that there's this quarrel between you."

"Really, May! how can you say that?" demanded Muriel indignantly. "If Dick—I mean Mr. Hilton—isn't to blame, what does he keep away for?"

"Well, considering you told him you never wished to

see him any more, I don't see what else you could expect the poor man to do."

"Well, he ought to have known that I didn't mean it—or, at any rate, he might have asked me again," she protested.

"Being merely a man, he hasn't been gifted by Providence with feminine perception," was the answer. "As a natural consequence, he doesn't understand that when a woman says 'no,' it's only a preliminary to saying 'yes' later on. He's a nice boy, though," she continued, "and I think you made a mistake to quarrel with him."

"It was all his fault, May. He let that horrid Barrington girl make violent love to him in public, when all the time he was engaged to me."

"My dear," returned the other quietly, "I wouldn't let that trouble me if I were you. It couldn't really have been serious, either, because Edith Barrington was also engaged herself at the time, and was actually married three days after she met Dick."

"Really, May? How do you know?" cried Muriel eagerly. "I never heard of it."

"Well, on the day that you quarrelled with poor Dick, you went away for a month, if you remember, to occupy yourself with your writing, and never saw a newspaper all the time. It didn't occur to me to mention the matter when you returned to town. Surely Dick told you of that, though? Why, I remember his telling me that he wrote to you about it. Didn't you get it?"

"Yes, but I sent his letter back, May. I'd said I wouldn't have anything more to do with him, and so I returned it unopened."

"That was scarcely brilliant of you, dear," observed her sister, "considering the result."

"I don't care!" answered the other defiantly. "I don't care a bit!"

"H'm!" reflected the other, as she watched the tell-tale tears starting to the speaker's eyes. "You may say you don't care, but you'll never make me believe it."

In the distress that her sister's unexpected revelation had occasioned her, the girl had almost entirely neglected the literary work that had hitherto absorbed so much of her time. It was quite useless, she soon realised by dint of trying, to do anything of the sort now, for, until her mind was at rest again, she felt quite unable to compose a line. Consequently, the story in which, under the title of "The Love That Lasts," she had attempted to relieve her feelings, on the discovery of her *fiancé's* supposed defection, remained unaltered. Her friend, Mr. Mortimer, had written once or twice about it, but even this incentive had failed to spur her to fresh efforts.

One afternoon, however, about three months from the date of her last interview with him, she suddenly met him in Fleet Street.

"Hullo, Miss Elliott!" he exclaimed, genially; "why have you been avoiding me in this reprehensible fashion of late? The pages of the *Empire Magazine* are simply yawning for you. Haven't you managed to find a satisfactory conclusion for 'The Love That Lasts' yet? I've been keeping a space for it for the last three months, you know."

"No, Mr. Mortimer," returned the girl wearily, "I haven't finished the story, and I'm not likely to, either. I can't find the 'happy ending,' somehow."

"Dear me!" returned the editor sympathetically, struck by the woebogone face looking up to him; "that's bad—very bad indeed! Now, look here, my young friend," he added briskly, as a sudden thought struck him, "never mind the story just now. I've something else for you to do. There's a dress rehearsal at the Lyceum at 4.30 this afternoon. I want you to go and write an article for me about it. Here's a ticket for a box. You will go? That's right. Good-bye."

He watched her drive away in a hansom to execute his commission, and then continued his journey.

"Poor little girl!" he murmured to himself as he walked along; "so she's like a good many other people in this world—can't find the 'happy ending.' What a pity she quarrelled with young Hilton, and what a much bigger pity it is—now that he's back in England—that he doesn't make it up to her! I wish I could bring them together again."

Suddenly an idea occurred to him. As it did so, he gave vent to such a peal of laughter that the passers-by turned round in surprise to see what could be amusing this middle-aged, good-humoured-looking gentleman who was walking so fast along the pavement.

"By Jove! I'll do it!" he exclaimed excitedly. "If I telephone at once it will be in time."

As Muriel Elliott sat in the corner of her box, twenty minutes later, she thought it was impossible to discover anything more depressing than to watch a rehearsal.

As she leant back in the shadow of the curtains the remembrance of the last occasion when she had been in the theatre occurred to her. It was only three months ago, she reflected. She had had a box—the very box she was in just now, she noticed with a start—for Irving in *Hamlet*, and Dick Hilton had been one of the party occupying it with her. Every incident of that memorable evening came back to her with a startling vividness; she seemed to be living it over again this afternoon. When the performance was over they had gone to the Savoy for supper, and he had shared the hansom that took her back, tired but very happy, to South Kensington afterwards. What a long time ago it all seemed now! She wondered if she would ever be really happy again.

So occupied was she in her reflections that she did not hear a tap at the door behind her. Nor, when it opened, and an attendant ushered someone into the box did she turn round. It was only through hearing, a moment later, a chair being moved beside her, that she became conscious that she was not alone. She looked round with a start at the discovery. As she did so she saw that the newcomer was a man. His face was turned from her, but, despite the gloom enveloping the box, she recognised, as she thought, something strangely familiar in the visitor's outline. A sudden impulse prompted her to touch his hand gently, and, scarcely conscious of what she was doing, she leant back for the purpose.

The man turned his head at the movement. A sudden light leapt into his eyes. Half-rising from his seat, he held out both his hands in welcome. "Muriel!" he cried. "So you are here, after all?"

"Dick—Dick! Is it really you at last?" she answered. "Have you come back to me again?"

He leant forward and kissed her by way of reply.

"But how did you know I was here?" she demanded a moment later.

"George Mortimer—bless him!—telephoned to me at the club half-an-hour ago that it was most important that I should go to box 'A' at the Lyceum this afternoon. He said I'd know why when I got there."

"And do you, dear?" she whispered softly.

His answer seemed to satisfy her, for at six o'clock the editor of the *Empire Magazine* received the following telegram: "Can finish the story, after all. I have found the 'happy ending.' Muriel Elliott."

Phil Greet.

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The Big Blue Diamond.

THE EXPERIENCES OF AN "I. D. B."

CHAPTER I.

Zulu Pete, from Kimberley.

I, GERALD WETTON, and my partner, Jack Lane, were eating and resting, at the close of the toughest day's work we had known since we had pitched, three months before, at Waaisveld, on the Transvaal border.

To make it worse we had taken—just nothing. Other days, a few sparklets, perhaps, or diamond clippings, had rewarded our efforts, but this day—nothing!

"Jack," said I despondingly, "this will never do! Old Viljoen knew what he was about when he sold us this rotten claim as being richly diamondiferous—and then *trekked*."

"I'd wring his neck if I had him here now," replied Jack grimly. "It's only that pretty daughter of his, Minnie, that would save him."

"Well, it's no use crying over spilt milk," said I. "I vote for a hark back to Kimberley in the morning."

"Just as you like, my boy!" said Lane. "I'm willing to follow my leader—meaning you—to Prester John's Land, if needs be, and if you only know where it is."

I do not suppose that the bag of stones we had actually "mined" would have fetched more than three hundred pounds in open market; though that is not to say that we were unpossessed of diamonds—some of them grand stones—got in another way.

Indeed, I make no secret of the fact that I bought stones of the blacks who passed by our claim at Waaisveld, on their way back to their several tribes.

These stones were, of course, in the first instance, stolen, and then concealed in the hair, beneath the skin, and in many another way. Equally, of course, I was acting illegally in thus illicitly purchasing; but when, as often happened, a fine stone was offered me at a price so absurdly below its real value that it amounted almost to a free gift of the gem, it was a temptation hard of resistance.

On this particular evening when, our meal finished, and everything, including our waggon and oxen, made snug for the night, we sat smoking our pipes, each of us thinking his own thoughts, a peculiarly weird-like hail came faintly up the valley from the south-west.

"Doesn't sound 'white,'" said Jack, listening intently. "More like a Zulu shout than anything else, and half-choked at that."

"It's certainly not 'white,'" I said. "Hark! there it is again!"

It was nearly dark, and though our fire cast a fairly big circle of light, we could not see more than a few yards in any direction.

Startlingly sudden, then, was the almost noiseless intrusion into the light-circle of a miserable, half-starved-looking Zulu.

He did not speak, but pointed, with skinny finger, to his mouth.

"The beggar's hungry," said Jack.

The newcomer seemed to understand, and made a ghastly attempt to smile.

"Here!" I said, reaching out for some of the remains of our own meal, and pushing them towards him. "Get that into you!"

He did not eat; he ravenously tore at, and bolted the food.

"Hasn't had anything to eat for a week, I should say!" said Jack.

The wretched-looking object nodded energetically in acquiescence.

His only clothing was a tattered waist-cloth and a broken, crownless old straw hat.

From the first I noticed a strange thing about him. An intermittent, half-turning of the head in a listening way.

Then I spoke to him.

"Where from, matey?"

But he only shook his head.

"Are you dumb, or what's the matter with you?" said Jack impatiently.

The only answer was a broader grin and a wider shake of the head. Then something seemed to strike him, for he opened wide his naturally enormous mouth and

we saw, by the light of the fire, that the man's tongue was gone; a harsh, guttural throat-sound being all that he was capable of.

"Poor beggar!" said Jack. "He's either been punished at the mines for diamond stealing, or at some previous time for something else by his chief. Anyway, it's a beastly brutal way of doing things."

"Yes," I said; "but I wonder what he's so worried about behind him. D'you see how he keeps his ear cocked in the direction he's just come from?"

"Yes," said Jack. "And look at him now?"

The black had suddenly sunk on to the ground in an apparent agony of terror. There he lay cowering, and emitting the most fearful noises that it is possible to conceive.

The cause of it all was soon revealed.

"Anybody at home?" came out of the darkness, valleywards, but close at hand, in strong nasal tones.

The query was followed up almost directly by the appearance at the fire-side of a tall, spare man, leading by the bridle a black Arab mare.

That is, the man was spare in a way only, being, as a matter-of-fact, well-knit and muscular.

"I reckon this to be the very luckiest thing I've struck any time these five days!" he said, the while hobbling his horse, and making himself comfortable as close to the embers as possible.

"Hullo!" he suddenly exclaimed, as his eye lit on the crouching figure of the Zulu. "Where did you spring from—you miserable dog of a diamond-thief?"

The poor wretch heard him, but took no notice.

"What's the trouble?" asked Jack. "Do you know the chap?"

"Know him! Where is the Kimberley miner who doesn't know 'Pete, the Zulu'? Why, he's stolen more stones than all the rest of the black trash at the mines put together."

"Suspected now?" I asked.

"Well, Mr.—er——"

"Wetton."

"Well, Mr. Wetton, it's like this, and darned strange, too—the beast has always managed somehow to secrete his swag, and no power on earth has ever succeeded in finding it. It's known that he's had the sparks, but he's smart enough not to let a chip even be found within a mile of his dirty person."

"Yes," I remarked, "if he's worked it that way, Mr.—er——"

"Crafte—Siever Crafte, of Chicago, City of Illinois."

"Well, Mr. Crafte, if he's worked it, as I have said, in that way he *is* smart and deserving of a certain amount of credit."

"Think so?" said our latest guest, with a peculiar screw-up of his left eye. "*I* think it's a matter of opinion, and *my* opinion is, that a short shrift, without judge or jury, is just the one thing he needs; and he should have it if I had my way."

"Sorry to say I don't agree with you," said Jack, quietly filling his pipe. "Wetton's right; and I don't care who hears me say so."

It was at this point in the conversation that I saw the black moving away, snake-like, upon his stomach.

Crafte saw him too, and made to spring up. Jack, however, caught hold of the Yankee by the right wrist, and kept him from rising.

"Let the poor beggar alone," said Jack. "If he has got anything belonging to you (which I very much doubt); you're not going to lynch him on *our* lot!"

"I'll put lead into him!" yelled the other, literally foaming at the mouth with rage.

Before either of us could prevent it, he had whipped out a six-shooter with his disengaged left hand.

Two almost simultaneous reports—a sharp cry—and then—silence.

Only for a moment, however. Jack released his hold on Crafte; all three of us then rushing round to the other side of the fire.

The Zulu was gone!

The only sign of him was a little pool of blood, and a trail of the same, leading away to the northward; close by the pool, as if dropped in the moment of agony and hurried escape, was a small, dirty piece of rag, evidently inclosing something.

Upon this Crafte sought to pounce, and would have succeeded in securing it had not I smartly put my foot upon it.

"It belongs to me! I tell you! It is mine! He stole it from me!"

"I've only your word for that," said I quietly; "and as I am not disposed to take your word as being sufficient evidence of your right of ownership in—in whatever this piece of rag may contain, why, I shall hold on—eh! Jack!"

"Certainly!" said Jack, playing warningly with his own revolver.

"You're a couple of dead beats!" hissed Crafte, almost inarticulate with disappointed spleen. "But don't think you'll score on the odd trick. I'll have it! mark you!—I'll have it—and that within forty-eight hours!"

He made a half-movement as if to fire at one or both of us, but Jack covered him with his own weapon, and he thought better of it.

Unhobbling his horse he sprang into the saddle, gave a vindictive cut with his heavy whip on the animal's flanks, and a still more cruel dig of his spurs into its sides, and galloped off at breakneck speed down the valley, in the direction he had come.

We looked at one another, Jack and I; then I lifted my foot, and picked up the dirty little parcel.

It was hard, and, with the covering, about the size of an ordinary hen's egg.

Slowly I unwrapped the casing of filthy linen.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Jack, as a curiously coloured rough stone was revealed.

It was a big blue diamond!

CHAPTER II.

The Siege of Viljoen's Farm.

It was towards the close of the day following our big "find," that Jack and I rode up to the "stoep" of the low-pitched frame building that old Viljoen had set up for a homestead on his new land.

We were both of us tired out with our long ride; but Jack, with thoughts of pretty Minnie Viljoen in his heart, had been a spur to my laggard journeying. And now, as if it were a reward for his brave persistency, Minnie herself was out there to greet us.

She was as winsome a specimen of Dutch beauty as could be found in a day's march. Her hair was a rich flaxen, and in such abundance that it was rather a trouble to her than otherwise. Her eyes were so tender of expression that it is not to be wondered at that Jack was magnetised by them beyond redemption.

I left the two together while I sought the farmer and his "vrou."

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Old Viljoen was not a bad sort of old chap in his way, though we fancied that he had overreached us a bit in the bargain for Waaisveld.

When I had explained to him the object of our surprise visit, he expressed himself pretty strongly upon one or two points.

"This American!" he said. "I think I know him. If he is the man I saw in Kimberley six months ago, then you had better look out. He's dangerous; and would think no more of killing you to get that stone than he did when he cut poor Pete the Zulu's tongue out, two years ago, by way of revenge."

"Did *he* do that?" I cried. "Then, if I ever meet him again, I'll shoot him in his tracks, as sure as my name is Gerald Wetton! Why, the man's a fiend!"

"He's just that!" said the old Dutchman, nodding his head vigorously. "But he's hard to trap. They tried at Kimberley to make him answer for his treatment of Pete, but he wriggled out of it. He's got sacks of money; but he's greedy—he's greedy! and if he's made up his mind to have this stone you've got—why, he'll play every trick he knows to get it."

"Well, Mr. Viljoen, my idea is this—we will intrust this diamond to you so long as we think necessary; you undertaking to hand it over only to me or Jack Lane. If this fellow Crafte follows us up, expecting to find it on or about us, he'll be disappointed. There may be trouble—there probably will; but—he won't get the stone."

"Ah! good! You trust me! Yes. I am Viljoen's—a rough old Dutchman; but he wouldn't rob you of a 'schilling's' worth. No! he would *die* rather!"

And so it was settled. We were to stop and sleep at Hagspruit that night, and were to return to Waaisveld in the early morning.

After supper I handed the stone to our host, who, for the moment, put it into an inner pocket of his coat.

"Ah!" cried Minnie, who was helping the maid to clear away. "Look!—a man's face at the window!"

We all of us ran outside on to the "stoep," but could see no one. All was silent as the grave.

"I am sure I saw a face," said Minnie, when we had come indoors again. "A long thin face, with no hair or beard on it."

The old farmer laughed, and told his daughter she was love-dreaming, whereat both she and Jack looked confused, and, it must be confessed, a bit foolish.

I should fancy that it must have been between one and two in the morning that Jack woke me, saying that he heard men's voices, and the tramping of feet round about the house.

I sat up and listened.

"By George! you're right, Jack! there's something wrong!"

As I spoke I sprang out of bed, Jack doing the same, and rapidly putting on my boots and trousers, approached the window to look out.

I suppose my white shirt afforded the mark, for immediately two bullets splashed on the side frame.

The two reports woke the old farmer, whom I heard shouting to the three hired men to get up and help him to see what was the matter.

"Va! va! you lazy rascals! the place will be burnt before you move! My 'sjamjok' shall be about your shoulders, if you're not out of it!"

Then all was hurly-burly.

Finding themselves discovered, the assailants—one or two of whom we could see were whites—directed a furious fusilade against the house.

The three women—old Mrs. Viljoen, Minnie, and the Dutch servant—remained in a small room at the back of the house used as a store-place.

But Minnie did not long keep out of danger. Before Jack could prevent her, she was in amongst us, handing ammunition, and even loading the rifles and revolvers.

"That's got one!" said Jack excitedly, as the flash of a torch outside showed a big man, in high boots, grey shirt, and a broad-brimmed felt hat, throw up his arms, as Jack's bullet reached him and fall on his face.

At the same moment, and by the same light, I saw Siever Crafte, revolver in hand, spring forward and make for the window leading on to the "stoep."

Old Viljoen was guarding that window, and I shouted to him to beware.

At the instant I cried: "Look out, farmer!" the window was dashed in, Crafte fired twice in rapid succession, and with a cry and a groan, poor old Viljoen fell—dead!

What followed was lightning-like and bewildering.

Instant with the fall of the old farmer, Crafte stooped, wrenched open the dead man's vest; tore from the bosom of his shirt the packet containing the stone; and turned and fled.

I emptied my revolver after him, as soon as I could collect my senses. Jack did the same, although poor Minnie's cries of distress, as she hung over her father's body, broke his aim.

It was all of no use; with the exception of the man Jack had shot just before, there was not a living soul within sight or sound of Hagspruit.

The big blue diamond was gone!

CHAPTER III.

A Rumour, and What Came of It.

I HAVE just heard, in a reliable quarter, that a *blue diamond*—the biggest ever known—has, within the past fortnight, been offered for sale in St. Petersburg, to the Tsar himself, by a certain wealthy American, who says that he purchased it six months ago from the man who found it.

This information has determined me to leave at once for the Russian capital, in order that I may, if possible, expose Siever Crafte (evidently the wealthy American aforesaid) and recover possession of the treasure of which he has robbed me.

Jack remains in South Africa to look after our joint interests there, and to care for the two women so pathetically cast upon his pitiful consideration.

* * * * *

Winter in St. Petersburg is something to be reckoned with.

In the Nevsky Prospect is a certain jeweller's shop much patronised by the Imperial Family; and on a day when a *drosky* set me down at its door, the snow, drifted by an icy wind, was half-way up its windows.

Ivan Sovski, the proprietor of the establishment, had not been prepared for my coming; I had reasons for making my visit a genuinely surprise one. It was the first move in a game of wits.

And the first move drew a blank.

"The 'blue diamond,' your excellency!" said old Ivan, with well-simulated astonishment, and regarding me cautiously from under his half-closed eyelids. "I have it not! I would like to have one—a good specimen—for His Imperial Majesty would give me my price for it—yes!"

I could not shake him; and so, here I was foiled at the very outset.

I might possibly have accepted the apparently inevitable, and turned back, when a good providence came to my aid and stayed my retreat.

A clatter—a jingling of sleigh-bells—an authoritative command or two in a hoarse voice, and an officer of the Imperial Guard entered the place.

There was much whispered, earnest conversation between Sovski and the Court emissary, mingled with many a side-glance from the former towards myself.

"Well," said I, on the officer's departure, "I am convinced now, M. Sovski, that you are deceiving me, and that the blue diamond I am in search of, and which is my property, is at this moment in the Winter Palace, the subject of the Tsar's consideration."

The jeweller wished to argue with me, but I declined to bandy words with him, and ordered my driver to proceed straight to the Bureau of the Minister of Police.

I found, on my arrival there, that the Minister was engaged. There being nothing unusual in this, I sat me down in an ante-room to wait patiently for my turn.

Presently the Minister's door opened and closed, and I heard footsteps descending the main staircase.

"M. Gerald Wetton?" said a voice at my side.

I started and looked up.

I bowed; and the voice—that of an officer of police—went on:

"Then, M. Wetton, I must trouble you to come with me."

He was very polite, but he did not usher me into the presence of the Minister. Something told me I was, in a way, in custody.

I got into my drosky again; but this time in company.

"The Winter Palace!" ordered the police-agent.

Arrived, we, after a brief wait, were conducted to a plainly-furnished room—empty.

I have been desired to suppress certain things that I saw and heard there, so will merely tell just sufficient to make clear the end of the story.

It seems that Siever Crafte had become cognisant of my presence in St. Petersburg, and of my business there. First putting in train, through Ivan Sovski, negotiations for the sale to the Tsar of the blue diamond, he then endeavoured to get me officially silenced until the sale should have been completed.

Like most clever people, however, he reckoned without his host, which, in this particular instance, was his Majesty's own suspicions of the American's *bona-fides*.

Arrangements were, therefore, made to confront us in the Imperial presence, when the Tsar would himself determine, from signs and evidence, whether I, Gerald Wetton, was the impudent pretender to the gem's possession that Siever Crafte claimed me to be.

How the Yankee adventurer contrived to elude the watchfulness of his police guardian, it is hard to say; but so it was—a heavy bribe being, probably, at the bottom of it. The officer had to confess that he could not produce his charge,

This was enough to clear me in official eyes, and I was able, in a few words, to prove my ownership of the jewel which now, I believe, forms part of His Majesty's Most Gracious Consort's uniquely magnificent collection of gems.

* * * * *

A few months later, in a rehabilitated "Hagspruit," Jack, and I together with Minnie and her mother, sat round the fire in a cosy "house-place" discussing the future.

Jack and I had already divided the sale-money of the blue diamond, he electing to marry Minnie and settle down at Hagspruit, while I decided to return to England, from which I had been absent for many years.

It was when we were dispersing, to retire to rest, that Jack spoke the last word.

"Gerald, old chum!" he said, smiling, and laying his hands on my shoulders. "I'll make a prophecy!"

"Yes," I said, "what is it?"

"That you won't stop in England six months."

And Jack was quite right, for long before the six months were up, I was back again at Waaisveld, this time alone.

But I never found another "big blue diamond."

Ralph Enderby.

He Wouldn't Like it.

Clara: "Well, dear, I am going to marry the Earl of Broadstairs." Maud: "Then what are you looking so glum about it for?" Clara: "I am afraid my *fiancé* won't like it. Men are so selfish."

Splendid Scheme.

"I've hit upon a great scheme," said a provincial editor. "I nearly doubled our circulation yesterday." "How did you work it?" "See that steel stamp? Well, I just cut out a paragraph in the local column of the whole edition." "How did that help the circulation?" "Every man in the town brought an extra copy to see what had been cut out."

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A Question of Identity.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

CHAPTER 1.

An Interesting Client.

"Joyce, dear, are you not coming to get some lunch? It is past one o'clock, and you have been at work since nine. Your poor hands must be frozen with that water."

A gay little laugh greeted this anxious question as a trim figure in a black gown and a big alpaca apron turned towards the open door of the small room. The chamber was bare and carpetless, its contents a fixed bench, laden with bottles and dishes, a pine-topped table, and a few cupboards.

Outside the large, uncurtained sashes of the single wide casement, a chill winter day frowned over a panorama of roofs and chimney-stacks, making the task which had just been interrupted seem unenviable enough. The girl at the window, her fingers dipped into a trough under a still running tap, was washing a dozen sheets of limp paper.

"Use is second nature, Marion," she remarked; "and as for lunch, I had a couple of biscuits an hour ago—I keep a tin on the premises. But you will be famishing, and so will Teddie; I was a brute to forget that you won't take your meals without me."

She dried her hands on her apron, gained the door and stepped through, putting an arm round the waist of the woman who had been standing on the threshold. The apartment beyond was extensive and airy, boasting a glass lean-to running its whole length. A quaint assortment of furniture, some rolls of painted canvas, a camera, and the huge focussing funnel of an arc-light, revealed the purpose of the place. It was a photographer's studio. On the mounts of the innumerable portraits and enlargements strewn about, was the conspicuous inscription: "Joyce Hammond, Day and Electric-light Studios, South Street, Scholes."

Joyce herself, dark, slender, active, moved with the graceful ease of a young and pretty woman. Her companion was older, graver, sterner, and while Joyce's rippling locks were of a raven blackness, the other's brown tresses were sown with tell-tale silver threads. Yet there was sufficient resemblance between the faces of both to suggest that they were sisters.

"Well," asked Joyce, briskly, as they crossed the floor to a narrow staircase that ascended in a distant corner, "and how goes on the mounting?"

Marion sighed.

"Not as fast as it ought to, Jo, dear!" she responded; "you made a bad bargain when you engaged me—I am not worth my salt. Teddie and I should have stopped in New Zealand and died. What claim have James Lichfield's deserted wife and child on anybody?"

"Rubbish!" cried Joyce. "Rome was not built in a day; you are beautifully neat, and speed will come to you with practice. Besides, don't you provide the cosiest lunches and teas and so save my purse and my digestion from the restaurant-keepers? Don't be a goose, May!"

She led the way up the awkward flight to reach a third floor of the suite which was described in professional advertisements as the "Studios." It was extremely diminutive and occupied by a coal-stove, some chairs, and a brace of tables, one covered by a variety of apparatus and a score of prints, mounted and unmounted; one laid for a meal. Near this latter was seated a handsome boy of five or six years, whose pale cheeks and intensely bright eyes bore witness to a delicate constitution.

"What a long time you've been, auntie Joyce!" he observed, pathetically; "I am so hungry."

Joyce stooped and kissed him.

"It was thoughtless of me, Teddie," she confessed, throwing off her apron; "but never mind, it shan't occur again. And what has mother for lunch this morning?"

The child put up his face to whisper:

"Steak!" he said, "and mushrooms; mother knew you liked them—isn't it a nice surprise?"

"It is, indeed," admitted Joyce, cutting a loaf of bread expertly as her sister deposited a steaming dish on the table; "your mother is a witch, Teddie. I hope I haven't spoilt the steak, that's all."

Marion Lichfield filled the three plates that had been heating on the stove. Her little son contemplated the plump white "buttons" of the mushrooms.

"Father was fond of mushrooms," he commented, "but ours came out of bottles, didn't they, mother? You used to cook them for father."

The elder of the listeners bit her lip and Joyce set down the bread-knife hastily to create a diversion.

"There," was her tactful interruption, "enjoy yours, Teddie dear, and don't trouble mother at present; she—she has a headache."

"That's with cooking," decided the child; "I am sorry, mother darling, but I will be quite quiet and then it will be better soon."

He paused—a bell had sounded in the studio underneath. Joyce pushed back her chair; she had just addressed herself to her belated meal.

"My luck!" she said; "but I shall be thankful if it is a customer; things have been ghastly this month. As for my lunch, you can keep it warm on the stove—business before pleasure."

She straightened her collar, smoothed her hair at a circular mirror hung over the stove and hastened down the irregular staircase, to the floor below.

Within the door that gave admission to the studio from the corridor of the building was a tall, broad-shouldered personage, clad in a rough serge suit and carrying a discoloured sombrero. His firm chin and strong mouth were almost hidden by a dense black beard. Seeing her, he bowed.

"Good afternoon!" he remarked, "is Mr. Hammond in—the gentleman who takes the portraits, I mean?"

Joyce flushed.

"There is no Mr. Hammond," she retorted. "I am Joyce Hammond, and at your service."

The newcomer whistled and instantly apologised. "Excuse me," he answered—his accent, though pleasant, was not that of the home-bred Briton—"but I read the

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whirly lettering on the photos in the case at the entrance as an abbreviation of 'Joseph'—J-o-s and an *h* written higher up, you know. Ten thousand pardons; I am charmed to make your acquaintance, Miss—or is it Mrs. Hammond?"

The girl received this ingenuous explanation with much gravity.

"Miss will do," she told him; "you were thinking of having some photographs—of yourself, I presume."

"Exactly," was the rejoinder; "and prowling round to discover a johnny who could turn out a portrait that wasn't a frightful insult to our common humanity, I—I noticed the specimens exhibited below. Miss Hammond, I congratulate you—you are a dandy photographer and no error."

Joyce reddened once more at the compliment to her skill.

"Th—thank you!" she stammered; "I—I do try to be an artist, as far as the camera will let me. What kind of photo do you want?" She reached to a pile of samples but her client waved them aside.

"Look here," he said, "I've been landed at this one-horse seaport of yours from an old wind-jammer—sailing-ship, you understand, mile-a-day cargo-boat. She picked me up and two or three others in the Pacific—we were all that was left of the *Amphiboa*, a Weldon liner, Vancouver to Auckland."

The young photographer was secretly admiring the stalwart, breezy figure of the narrator; he seemed an ideal hero of a romance of the ocean. Unconscious of her scrutiny he went on with his tale.

"The *Amphiboa*," he pursued, "met a squall off the coast of North Island (that's the top half of New Zealand) was blown out of her course and struck a barren reef in the southern Pacific. We launched five boats, and none of the other four—they say at Lloyd's—have been heard of."

The cheerful, sun-burnt visage of her unconventional customer grew sad and reverent.

"Poor beggars!" he murmured; "only a few miles from home, and then, a fifty-six hours' gale and destruction. Deuced hard lines, and lots of them going home to wives and kids."

Joyce gazed at him absorbedly; she felt that she could see the catastrophe he described with such succinctness, the long fight against the pitiless gale, the wreck upon the reef, the days in the open boat, the unexpected rescue! Her customer roused her.

"What's done, is done," he added; "and we can quote Shakespeare to prove that it's no use worrying about what can't be remedied. I cabled to New Zealand, got some money and references, and now I'm off to London. But I wanted a picture of myself as I came ashore a week ago, so I've kept the beard a few hours more, put on these togs again and this hat, which I bought of a sailor for some tobacco. Make a good picture of me and charge me top-rates. I like that darkish-brown thing you have in the case below. A dozen of that sort might do me, I fancy."

A sigh of pleasure escaped Joyce Hammond—he was ordering a carbon panel, worth five guineas a dozen. It was months since she had had a similar commission.

"Will you—will you sit now?" she asked, glancing towards the camera. He assented, and she stepped to the end of the studio to arrange for the operation. Her latest task had been the photographing of a family group, and the floor was still lumbered by the inevitable accessories. Joyce began to drag them aside.

"By Jove!" cried her athletic client, "let me do that." And he flung down his picturesque hat and effected a clearance in a twinkling. "Shall we need any of this stuff?" he demanded, as he surveyed the medley of chairs, settees, pedestals, hassocks on either hand, an empty space between backed by a painted cloth representing the interior of a middle-class drawing-room.

Joyce shook her head, she had been studying him while he worked. A pull at a cord sent the background out of sight, Joyce hauled down another—a plain one, with a few simple lights and shadows. Before it she threw a strip of artificial turf.

"Please stand there," she said, "and hold your hat in your hand?"

The other nodded approvingly and obeyed. He was a fine subject for a full-length portrait and settled easily into the desired pose; a certain stamp of breeding showed through his rough costume and swarthy complexion, his beard, crisp and curling, feathered naturally over his deep chin.

"We need something else," decided the operator; "you look too like a soldier standing at ease. Wait, I have it."

She hastened to a pile of oddments in a convenient nook, picked up a short-handled, long-thonged whip of plaited hide and brought it to him.

"Crush your hat slightly in your fingers," she instructed, "and grasp the whip with the same hand, the lash looped and dangling."

He did as she commanded. Joyce frowned thoughtfully, then went to peer at him through the camera, adjusting the focussing-cloth over her pretty head and pondering his image on the ground-glass screen.

"Yes," she declared, "that is perfect; please remain as you are till I fetch the plate."

She dived into a cramped dark roomf whose ruby pane admitted the faintest gleam from the studio, shut a door, and left her client alone for a minute. That gentleman played with his whip and took stock of his surroundings.

"Smart little girl!" he muttered; "proud and independent, and clever, I'll bet. Beastly shame for her to have to earn her living in this hole. Wonder if she does earn it; anyhow, she's plucky to try. By Jupiter!" he added suddenly, "I'll have two dozen of those photos and I'll get her to do some of me after I've scraped off this confounded hair—sort of 'before' and 'after'—dashed if I don't!"

His communings with himself were checked by the arrival of Joyce bearing the slide containing the plate for the production of the negative. She contemplated critically the reflection of his attitude on the focussing-screen, put on the cap, slipped in the slide, and drew up the flap.

"Ready?" she said. Her customer relapsed into statuesque calm; Joyce whisked off the cap, counted silently, and replaced it.

"I will make sure it is all right," she announced, and return to her mysterious sanctum. There was a chime of tinkling glass and rattled porcelain, then the splash of water and an interval, which the sitter, or rather the stander, spent in regarding a three-quarter enlargement of Joyce herself.

"You're a daisy," he muttered, "and real grit, or I'm no judge! I'll have to have a picture of you for a memento."

With great coolness he sorted out a platinotype cabinet of the little photographer, brushed the dust off it, and surveyed it appreciatively and pocketed it.

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A second later Joyce had reappeared. Her fingers were wet, and she held between them a dripping negative.

"Very good," she announced, sloping it dexterously to the light. The original looked and saw on the plate that ghostly but marvellous representation which it is possible to obtain by reflection from most negatives.

"The dickens!" he exclaimed; "that is excellent. Do me two dozen, Miss Hammond — I have hosts of friends down under and they'll all want one. Oh, and when I have got rid of my beard and doffed this rig-out for the last time in favour of some decent clothes, I shall ask you to have another shot at me. Would —would to-morrow do?"

"Certainly," said Joyce, with an ill-concealed satisfaction; "any hour in the morning, after nine—eleven would suit me quite. But I don't know what name to —to——"

"To book them to," concluded her client; "absurd, credit is not for a bird of passage like me, I will pay something on account." He snatched out a pocket-book and gave her a note—for five pounds. "As for the name," he proceeded, "I am Edward Chaloner, of Dundalk, New Zealand, and the Crescent Hotel, Scholes. For the present, Miss Hammond, *au revoir*. I will call at eleven in the morning more fittingly attired to pay my respects to a lady of your attainments."

He bowed, smiled, accepted a receipt for the note, glanced at her absently, and departed as one who is lost in thought. Joyce studied the reflected "positive" again.

"He is very nice!" she sighed; "young and manly, and frank and generous. Heigho! there are pleasanter people in the world than I had grown to believe. I must show him to Marion."

She crossed the studio and ran up the rickety stairs with the negative.

"May," she cried, springing into the tiny room at the stairhead, "here's a stroke of luck, an order for two dozen carbon panels and five pounds on account. Such a handsome fellow—he had been shipwrecked and brought to England on a cargo-boat. He wishes to have a memento of his experiences, so came with a beard like a pilgrim and in a slop suit. But of course he is a gentleman." She held the plate for her sister to see.

Marion Lichfield started up.

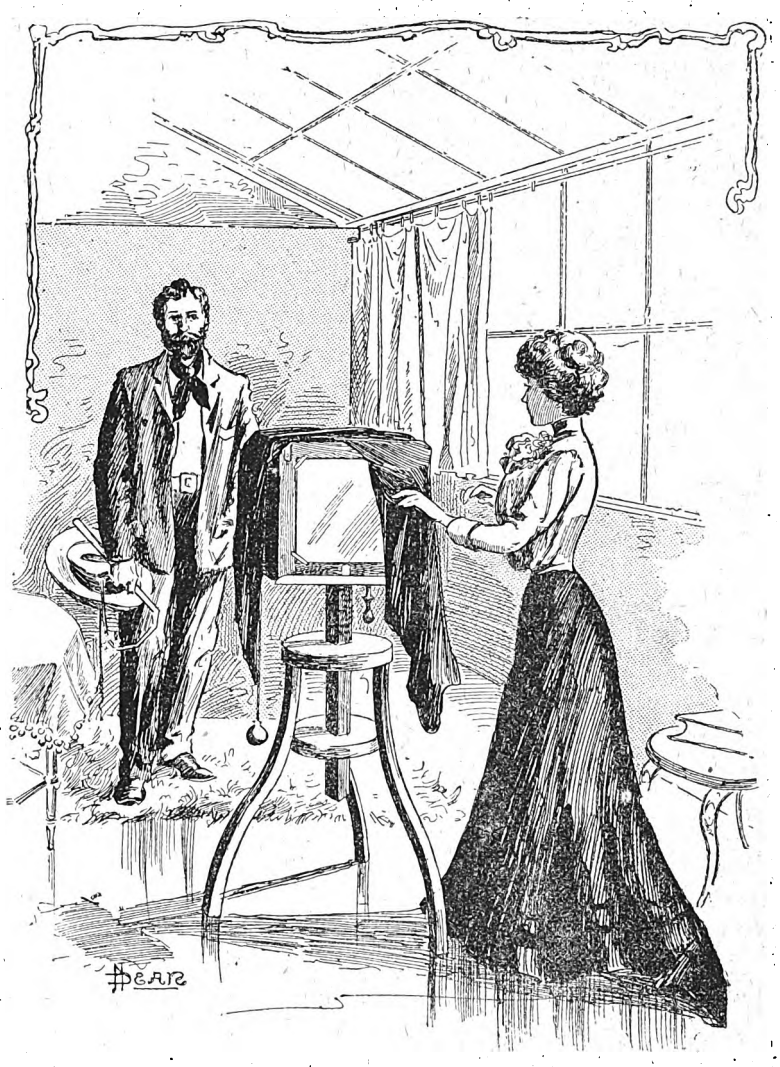
"Joyce," she gasped, "do you know who this man is?"

The younger woman gazed at her, surprised.

"Yes," she said, "a Mr. Edward Chaloner, of Dundalk, New Zealand."

Her sister staggered and leant against the table for support. The child Teddie crept to her side, alarmed by her demeanour. His mother lowered her voice that it might reach only Joyce's ears.

"An old alias!" she whispered; "I have heard ti often. Joyce, this is a portrait of my husband!"



"Yes," she declared, "that is perfect; please remain as you are till I fetch the plate."

CHAPTER II.

A Letter and an Arrest.

"Are you quite—quite sure—it is he, Marion; would not your husband have recognised my name and betrayed some alarm, however little? Though he has never seen me before, he will know that I exist. I wrote to you sometimes, and you must have spoken of me."

Joyce held up a print of the negative she had taken the preceding day; the picture was a fine one, she could not help admiring the athletic pose and vigorous life of the figure in the rough garments.

Marion Lichfield sneered as she bent over the task of mounting her sister's photographs.

"Jim is not the sort to be easily thrown off his balance," she said; "he admitted himself that he thought the mark on the portraits in the case at the door was 'Joseph Hammond.' If he had read it as Joyce he would never have crossed the threshold, I'll wager."

The younger woman pondered the argument.

"I wouldn't be too positive, Marion dear," she urged; "you've no idea how deceiving a beard is to the eye. Perhaps if you saw his face clean-shaven you would laugh at the thought of imagining him to be your husband."

A shrug of her shoulders was Marion Lichfield's answer.

"Do you fancy I'm a fool, Joyce?" she added; "why, the alias he gave you helps to prove his identity—he used to call himself Edward Chaloner more often than not. No, it's Jim, flush of money for the moment and spending it recklessly as usual."

Joyce abandoned the controversy.

"What will you do about it?" she asked, laying down the wet print and turning to warm her chilled fingers at the stove. The child Teddie had fallen asleep over a toy engine, his arms on the table at which his mother worked, and his head resting upon them. Joyce stepped to him and moved him gently into a less uncomfortable attitude.

Marion had been considering the question put to her.

"I shan't see him," she announced. "I hate him for leaving the boy to starve; I always shall hate him. But I should like him to learn that I know where he is, and that he is squandering pounds on the indulgence of his own vanity while his son and I sponge on you."

"Please, please, Marion!" begged her sister.

But Marion Lichfield continued fiercely:

"I'm going out about the time you expect him—Teddie shall stop, though. When Jim comes tell him he has been recognised, and if he denies it, call the boy. That will convince you."

Joyce took up the portrait of the man who had introduced himself as Edward Chaloner and showed it nervously to the resentful Marion.

"Dear," she murmured, "don't be so hard; he doesn't seem as if he could be all bad. Wouldn't it be splendid if you found he didn't desert you—if it was an accident. It might have been—he was shipwrecked, he says."

Marion Lichfield stamped her foot.

"Joyce," she cried, "I've no patience with you for believing his fairy tales; he warned me when he left me in New Zealand and went to America that we should not meet again. But there, you're not to blame, I suppose; Jim has a glib tongue and could twist a woman round his finger so long as she wasn't his wife."

Joyce looked at her watch—a bell had just rung below.

"Half-past ten," she said; "that is some people for a group sitting I arranged to do early. Eleven o'clock was what I told Mr—Mr. Chaloner."

"Very well," vouchsafed Marion drily; "I will go as soon as I can. And when he does put in an appearance, Joyce, you can let him know that I wouldn't see him again if—if he were on his death-bed."

Her sister shuddered but kept silence, and with a mute caress to the slumbering child, hurried down to keep her appointment. Marion worked on steadily, her thin hands twitching as she laboured; she was not a woman to forgive easily such a wrong as that which had thrown her upon Joyce's generosity, and yet the latter's appeal had stung her to the quick; she shrank from realising that her husband had so powerfully impressed his romantic personality upon the girl as to lead her to plead his cause with his actual victim. She grew almost jealous and even contemplated remaining to witness the interview. But pride was too much for her; she rose, donned her hat and cloak, and descended to the studio.

Joyce was posing a group of young folks, who laughed and chattered provokingly. Marion passed them with a nod to the operator and went out at the principal exit. As she drew the door ajar, she encountered a ragged lad on the point of entering.

"Beg pardon, ma'am!" he said, "but is there a party of the name of Mrs. Lichfield here? I've a letter for her."

Marion surveyed him, hesitating; she could think of none who was likely to send her a communication save by post.

"I—I am Mrs. Lichfield," she replied; "Mrs. James Lichfield."

"Right, oh," declared the messenger; "then this is for you, ma'am," and he produced a dirty envelope, directed in a scrawl the sight of which made Marion's heart leap into her mouth. It was that of her husband.

Hurriedly she tore it open; a scrap of soiled paper fell out. She unfolded it and gathered the purport of the epistle at a glance. Its contents were brief, and ran—

"My dear Wife,—

"If ever you loved me, come to me when you get this. You'll be surprised to find that I'm in England. I reached London on a sailing-ship. I had to hook it out of New Zealand over some bother about a cheque. Hearing you were with Joyce I made for Scholes, arrived yesterday, and was going to try and see you when I met with an accident and fear I am dying. Come to me, Marion, and don't tell a soul where I am."

The letter was signed "Your wretched husband, Jim," and had postscript, "You may trust the bearer."

Marion stared at the missive; the writing was her husband's beyond doubt, though weak and straggling enough. She had been right after all. Edward Chaloner was James Lichfield, and, prompted by his accustomed caution, he must have been spying out the state of affairs without committing himself.

The order he had given and the five pounds he had left must have been for her sake rather than Joyce's. the pretence of misreading the name on the specimens at the street entrance a mere trick to divert suspicion. He had meant to ask for her on his next call, perhaps to intreat her pardon. And now he was dying! Marion had no thought for his hinted crime, no thought for Joyce or the child; she was consumed by a burning desire to be near him.

"I am ready!" she told the ragged youth, who had studied her curiously during her consideration of the letter; "show me the way."

The lad nodded and began to slouch down the long flights that led to the ground floor of the building. Marion followed him. A few moments later they were lost in the motley crowd that drifted past the narrow lobby which gave upon the chief thoroughfare of the sea-port town.

Hardly had they disappeared than a smartly-dressed person entered the passage and leapt up the stone steps three at a time. Clean-shaven as he was, it would not have been difficult to recognise in him the identical caller, who, bearded like the bard and clad in a very

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different costume, had visited Joyce Hammond the previous afternoon under the style of Edward Chaloner.

Arrived at the topmost landing, he turned the knob of the studio-door and went in. The members of the "group" had gone and the room was empty. The sound of the bell, however, brought Joyce from the small upper chamber. As she descended the rickety stairs, he smiled and advanced to meet her.

"Good morning!" he began, gazing at her grave little countenance with obvious admiration.

Joyce set her level brows and red lips and answered him curtly:

"Good morning, Mr. Lichfield!" was her unexpected retort.

The man thus addressed regarded her amazedly.

"There is some misapprehension," he replied; "I am Edward Chaloner, and I have an appointment for a sitting at eleven o'clock."

"Exactly!" intimated Joyce; "and as your wife saw the portrait I took yesterday she was able to recognise in Mr. Edward Chaloner her own profligate husband. As for the name, it is an old alias of yours."

"Are you mad?" stammered the other; "I am Edward Chaloner and I can prove it, though, unluckily, not without notice, for I know no one in Scholes. I have already explained my position to you, Miss Hammond, and I fail to comprehend why you should credit absurd statements as to my identity. But as I have got rid of my beard, you have only to photograph me and send a copy to Dundalk, New Zealand, and you will be told by cable that I am Edward Chaloner, only son of Edward Chaloner, Commissioner of Police for Dundalk, and that I am myself a bachelor. If I am supposed to be married, why not confront me with the lady?"

"She refuses to see you," said Joyce, warmed by his audacity; "even if you were on your death-bed she would not come to you. But you shall see your child — the boy you deserted, to starve or not — as Fate might decide!"

Darting to the foot of the distant stair, she called softly and a little figure crept down it. Joyce caught up her nephew and stepped back across the room.

The boy did not allow her time to speak, but with a cry of "Father!" stretched out his arms and struggled to free himself from Joyce's grasp.

Edward Chaloner recoiled.

"This is a plot!" he cried scornfully; "a contemptible plot to blackmail me. I never saw the child in my life — poor little beggar, what hound has taught him his part in this infernal conspiracy?"

"Well!" ejaculated Joyce; "I did try to think kindly of you, Mr. Lichfield, but I am certain now that you are an unprincipled scoundrel, and I am sorry my sister ever set eyes on you, so there!"

"Your sister!" gasped the other. "Your sister! Gracious heavens, what tangle is this? Surely the child can't be perfect in his fiendish lesson—let me cross-examine him."

Joyce sprang back

"You shan't touch him," she said; "all you can do is to go and—and quickly."

Her advice was not acted upon. "Edward Chaloner" stood as if paralysed, contemplating her.

Suddenly the door behind him was thrust open and a couple of bluecoats, surmounted by spiked helmets, appeared, "Edward Chaloner" was clutched by the elbows and pinioned.

"Very good!" commented a calm voice. "James Lichfield, I arrest you on the charge of forging, at Wellington, New Zealand, a cheque for sixty pounds on the Bank of Australasia, in September of last year. An application will be made in due course for your transmission to Wellington for trial. Anything you say hereafter may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

The speaker, a pompous giant in the uniform of a detective-inspector, stalked into the studio and gained the side of "Edward Chaloner."

CHAPTER III.

The White Scar.

"I AM not the person you imagine me to be, and I warn you that in arresting and detaining me you are rendering yourselves liable to a suit for damages. You see I know a little of the law, my dad was not Police-Commissioner at Dundalk for nothing."

The maker of these remarks folded his arms on the steel bar of the charge-dock which graced the principal police-station in the small town of Scholes, and surveyed disdainfully a group consisting of a detective-inspector and two constables. Behind them, at the charge-desk sat a sergeant, his pen in his fingers. Close to stood Joyce Hammond herself, holding by the hand her shrinking nephew—the child Teddie.

The sergeant looked inquiringly at the detective, who shrugged his shoulders.

"You recognise the prisoner as James Lichfield?" he inquired of Joyce.

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"The prisoner was identified, sergeant," he said, "from the description furnished to Scotland Yard by the New Zealand authorities. But in any case this young lady, his relative by marriage, knows him to be her brother-in-law, and the child, which is his, recognised him immediately on seeing him. The arrest was effected in Miss Hammond's place of business—where prisoner had no doubt gone to visit his wife, who is staying with her sister. I have left a man to bring on the wife, she being out at the time."

The sturdy official at the charge-desk coughed.

"You recognise the prisoner as James Lichfield?" he inquired of Joyce.

The photographer shook her head.

"My sister saw a portrait of him taken yesterday by me," came the reply, "before he had shaved off his beard; she said it was that of her husband—the portrait, I mean. But I never saw him, to my knowledge."

"Now, youngster," intervened the detective, addressing himself to the child at Joyce's skirts, "tell me who is that in the corner there?"

Teddie clung to Joyce.

"Please," he murmured, "it's—it's like father, but his face isn't hurt any more, and he—he won't smile at me."

"His face isn't hurt any more," repeated the sergeant, rubbing one ear meditatively; "what do you mean by that?"

For answer the boy put a finger to his own soft cheek.

"Father's face was scratched all down here," faltered the sweet treble, "and—and he said it would never go away. A man did it in a fight, with a big knife."

"Phew!" whistled the sergeant, "a scar; where is the description, inspector? the prisoner has no scar."

The other drew out a note-book and read a few lines from it. "James Lichfield," he said; "about twenty-seven years of age, five feet ten inches or thereabouts, but looks taller, muscular figure, grey eyes, straight nose, clean-shaven at date of disappearance, white scar on left cheek—near jaw bone, goes occasionally by the name of Edward Chaloner."

The sergeant had been checking off the various particulars.

"All correct," he decided, "except the scar. Well, the only person who can settle the question is the prisoner's—that is to say, James Lichfield's—wife. Till she can be found I shall not, in the absence of the scar, book the charge against the prisoner. I doubt very much whether I ought to detain him—the scar seems a necessary part of the identification. My men could, of course, keep him under observation."

The inspector twisted his moustache; he was disconcerted by this sudden flaw in his case.

"I should advise," he commenced, but paused; a third constable had entered the station and was saluting.

"Sorry not to have brought the lady, sir," he observed, "but I have seen her, and Lichfield, too—good heavens!" He had broken off to stare at the figure in the dock.

A heavy palm was laid on his shoulders, the palm of the detective-inspector.

"You've seen Lichfield," he asked brusquely; "isn't that him, then?"

The constable stammered.

"It's—it's like him," was the response, "but for the scar on his cheek, sir. The man that Mrs. Lichfield declares to be her husband is dying at a lodging-house by the docks; he was knocked down by a lorry yesterday, and some fatal injury has just developed. He had sent for her this morning secretly and she got his messenger—a lad—to go back with word to Miss Hammond. I screwed it out of him and followed up the trail."

His superior stepped to the charge-dock and raised the steel bar.

"Will you do me the favour to come out, sir?" he requested; "I am a bit of a blunderer, it seems."

Edward Chaloner laughed, relieved in spite of himself.

"Don't apologise to me," he said, "but to Miss Hammond, for disturbing her work and dragging her to this unpleasant quarter of the world."

He crossed the room and held out his hand to Joyce.

"You were sorely tempted to believe in me all the while, weren't you?" he asked; "I saw it in your eyes. Thank you for that much. And now, don't you think you had better go to your sister—they said her husband was dying, didn't they?"

Joyce clasped his strong brown fingers and a hot tear trickled down her cheek.

"I—I'm afraid I said some very harsh things to you!" she rejoined; "you must have thought me awfully unwomanly."

Edward Chaloner pressed the palms in his own.

"I thought you were just the sort of person," he confessed, "whose respect I would most wish to gain—and keep."

He turned to a constable, and spoke with the sharp inflection of habitual command.

"Get me a cab," he ordered—"a four-wheeler." He slipped a hand into his pockets and hauled up some silver. "Here, sergeant," he added, "let your men drink the health of their prisoner when they go off duty."

Twenty minutes later Edward Chaloner and Joyce Hammond stood at the bedside of James Lichfield; they had reached it too late, and the features that were so like those of the photographer's client were set in the stiff mask of death.

Marion Lichfield did not weep.

"It is better so," she said, "but I am glad he wanted me at the last."

* * * * *

Edward Chaloner sat for that second portrait, after all. Indeed, his return to New Zealand was unconscionably delayed by his interest in photography and in Miss Joyce Hammond. Nor did he go back to Dundalk alone; the Day and Electric-light Studios were sold up, their late proprietor having abandoned both single blessedness and a business life. Marion and her son remained in England, provided for by her new and wealthy brother-in-law.

Not until that gentleman had reached New Zealand with his bride, and they were settled in their up-country home, did Edward Chaloner finally solve a riddle that had long haunted him.

"By Jove!" he said one day to his wife, "that beggar Lichfield must have known he was like me—that is the explanation of his impudent alias. Teddie may even be my namesake and I never guessed it. Lucky his father did me no worse harm than giving me a bad quarter of an hour at that confounded police-station in Scholes—the rascal. But there, we will speak nothing but good of the dead—and Teddie's pater."

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The Amateur Carpenter.

It is great fun to watch an amateur carpenter. He usually knows how to use tools just about as well as a hen knows how to paint a rose. He may be a good, honest, and even virtuous citizen in other respects, but when he retires to his workroom and strips off his coat and vest for a little recreation with edged tools, it is just as well not to have any of the women folks or children within hearing. The dog may come in if he wants to, but it must be with the understanding that it is at his own risk. It is said that dogs are intelligent. Some dogs are; but the dog that persists in hanging about an amateur carpenter isn't worth the leather it takes to make his collar.

The amateur carpenter always wants to make something without wasting any time. He is never content to go through with a course of experimental processes in wood. If he saws a board it is not to see how well or how straight he can learn to do it, but to make it fit into some mechanical creation of his fertile brain. If he drives a nail it is not to discover the mystery of doing it without splitting either of the surfaces which it joins, or how to keep it from staggering about like a lamp-post on a club night. He drives it, of course, to make the sides of a box stick on.

It is this insatiable constructive passion which gets the amateur carpenter into trouble. If he would be content with using his tools at first to find out how to use them, and afterwards to find out what to use them for, he would get along much better. But no; he must make something. He has an ideal in his head, and he immediately sets to work to carve it out in wood and nails.

By-and-bye, after a great deal of perspiring and muttered utterance, he gets the pieces, the constituent parts, of the thing blocked out; and here he takes a rest and contemplates his blistered palms with considerable self-satisfaction. It looks as though the chief difficulty has been conquered; all that remains to be done is to put the pieces together and the thing will be complete. But, alas for his short-lived confidence! The trials of the amateur carpenter have just begun.

When he buckles to work again, he is astonished to find that the constituent parts of his conception don't harmonise, as you may say, worth a halfpenny. One slants to the north, and the other to the south, one is bigger at the top, and the other at the bottom. Change them round, and it works just the other way, but for the life of him he can't make them so that they will come out even. He tries the sides, and they are four times as bad. One laps over the two ends about an inch each way, and the other one is about an inch too short.

Then the amateur carpenter pours out the vials of his wrath. With one mighty kick he sends the ingredients of his masterpiece flying across the room. The dog gets the piece that is full of half-driven nails just in that portion of his anatomy most vitally connected with his howling apparatus, and the chorus of epithets and yells that ascends from that small back chamber is something awful. To add to his boiling rage, the amateur has severely sprained and otherwise inconvenienced his two most efficient toes, from having forgotten the fact that he had his slippers on instead of his boots when his emotions got the better of him.

On the whole, his first effort cannot be set down as an unqualified success. Still, he does not wish to give up so easily, and, after hobbling about and kicking the dog three or four times with his well foot, to even things up, he sits down and tries to think of something simple to make.

How, for instance, would a doll-table for the little girl do? A square bit of board, with four holes at the four corners, and rounded sticks driven into them, would be the general plan of it. Simple enough, surely! He can do *that* without any trouble. So up he gets, selects his board, and proceeds to saw off the requisite portion of it. When about half-way through the board the saw sticks, and it will not move either way. The amateur carpenter tugs away for a few minutes, and then once again his choler begins to rise—not his paper-collar; that was up about his ears a good while ago. He jumps up on the bench, plants both feet on the board, grabs the saw-handle, and jerks backward with all his might.

The saw comes out with a rush, and the amateur carpenter swoops down off the bench, and plunges the back of his head into the nail-box. Fortunately his collar protects his scalp somewhat, and he escapes with a vision of two billion stars, and a long raw scratch on the neck.

The saw, however, is now out of the board, and a brilliant thought occurs to the amateur carpenter. He has heard that lard or tallow rubbed on a refractory saw will cause it to glide with the most charming smoothness through the tightest kind of board. So he goes and hunts up the servant, and persuades her to let him take the lard-pail. Armed with this he returns to his stronghold, and the dog—like a thick-headed ass—returns with him. The amateur carpenter besmears the saw for its entire length on both sides with lard an inch deep, and then goes for the board again.

The saw runs easier, but the lard covers up his guiding mark, and he works off on a sort of tangent. It will do, however, for such a rude and simple affair as a home-made doll-table. Now he must bore the holes in the four corners.

He selects a bit of about the right size, screws it into the bit-brace, puts his block over a hole in the bench, weighs it, and proceeds to bore. For a few moments the chips fly in a lively manner, then there is an ominous cracking sound, the bit goes through with a rush, and the amateur carpenter, unable to recover himself, comes down slap on the bench, knocking all the wind out of him, and giving himself a sanguinary nose by banging that member against the edge of the tool-chest.

This ends his recreation for the first day. With a howl of anguish and rage he darts from the room, holding his nose in his hand and yelling for a handkerchief. Finally, after his devoted wife has dropped half-a-dozen bunches of cold keys down his back and gone through the whole list of superstitious remedies for nose-bleed, he recovers, bathes, clothes himself, and returns to his right mind.

O. P. W.

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GORDON'S DAUGHTER.

HAD anyone suggested to Paul Gordon on his wedding-day, that it is when Fate gives us what we ask that we should beware of her, he would have scoffed at the idea. Had some cynical person gone further and insinuated that possibly five years of life with the sweet creature who stood beside him, looking so gracious and tender in her bridal robes, would change his eager confidence in life into bitter distrust, his resentment would probably have taken a more active form.

She was a charming bride, with her masses of shining brown hair, delicate features and slender grace, and Gordon felt very solemn and humble as he looked down upon her. His vision suddenly became indistinct, and no more fervent prayer ever went up from a full heart than ascended from his as he knelt at the chancel rail beside her, lifting his heart dumbly to his Maker.

In a sort of beautiful vision he saw their life together stretching away from the little West Newton church; going on and on like a long, sunny, peaceful road until it was lost in a happy blurr. With the inspiration of her presence forever beside him, he would live up to his best; he would achieve great things.

Matrimony shatters a good many illusions. Five years from his wedding-day, the genial, great-hearted Gordon was a disappointed, cynical man, whose attitude towards his wife was one of contemptuous toleration, though he was not without a certain appreciation of the humour of his destiny.

Sometimes in the solitude of his library he indulged in a hard, mirthless laugh, as he thought of the difference between his dreams and the reality.

He was a rising man in his profession—that part of his dreams, at least, had come true—but there was no heart-to-heart companion to share the delights of achievement with him—to spur him on when he was weary and disillusioned.

And yet he had married a girl whom any man might have been proud to win. It was the instance of the Ugling Duckling reversed! Helen Gordon was not only beautiful, but there was a certain ethereal quality about her beauty which touched the imagination. At a time when a college training for women was thought to be scarcely a desirable thing, she had been a teacher and paid her own way through college, as her father refused to listen to any such nonsense.

How Gordon had gloried in her intellect and energy. Other girls might be as fair as she, but where was there one who combined beauty, grace and intellect with so much womanly charm? In the days of their courtship they had planned to study together, and it never struck him that it was simply his enthusiasm which had carried her along—that the plans were more his than hers. She was to keep him in touch with literature, to keep him from growing one-sided mentally, as professional men are apt to do.

And, indeed, they had made a beginning, as a very respectable display of French and German books which lined the library shelves—to which Gordon's eyes sometimes turned with a bitter sneer — attested. Then imperceptibly some inherited languour of the little bride's, which had until then been dormant, began to assert itself. She never openly opposed his wishes, but there was always some excellent excuse for putting off the work they had planned to do together. The first year of their married life passed and Gordon began to realise that he was pursuing a will-o'-the-wisp—realised it with a dull pain, a deep, inward hurt which rankled the more that it was hidden beneath a calm manner.

He did not confide his plans to her now, for he had discovered that it only wearied her, though she listened to him in a patient, uncomplaining way. Then hope awakened once more in his heart. It would be all different when the baby came! He took all the blame for the sordid failure of their married life upon himself. He was a brute and he rated himself soundly for the irritation that had grown up in his breast against her.

The baby, of course, would be a boy. In the indomitable strength of his desire he never once doubted that—never admitted the possibility that it could be otherwise. He was happy once more and his imagination ran away with him. Long before the little stranger appeared, he had gone with him step by step through his babyhood, bought him a pony and taught him to ride, and shared all his boyish joys and sorrows. He even went further and fancied him a great lad to whom his heart went out with a mighty tenderness as he pointed out to him his own mistakes and tried to shield him from similar ones. And then came the stupefying intelligence that his boy was a girl!

At this new disappointment, a wild, unreasoning bitterness against mother and child surged through him. His heart-hunger was turned back upon itself once more. He was one of those pronounced masculine creatures to whom the society of his own sex is indispensable. He had had one desolating glimpse of how divine a thing the companionship of woman may be—one glimpse which had vanished and left him lonely for evermore. It was this great, aching emptiness in his life that the boy was to fill.

Wrath and repulsion filled his soul as he thought of the woman creature who could prove so alluring and so delusive!

"A girl!" he exclaimed bitterly. "What use have I for a girl! She will grow up and gossip and flirt and"—in the wild turmoil of his disappointment he said it aloud with brutal emphasis—"disappoint some other man as her mother has disappointed me!"

From that time, Gordon was a changed man. He devoted himself with restless ardour to his profession, treated his wife with open disdain and did not scruple

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to show his scorn for the pettiness of her interests. Her time was pretty evenly divided between shopping and watching the occupants of the opposite houses with a morbid curiosity about their goings and comings.

Poor little Mrs. Gordon! Through some fatal inheritance a sudden numbness fell upon her higher nature with marriage. As Mrs. Gordon, she felt that all reason for strenuousness was removed. The exquisite, soulful quality of her beauty gradually disappeared, leaving a pretty woman with a face whose plumpness was rapidly becoming fat, and whose calmness would soon be called phlegmatic.

Mindful of her vow to love, honour, and obey, she grew daily more punctilious about details as she neglected essentials. It was all nonsense now that they were married—that idea of Paul's about her studying! She would not, could not study and read, but she bore his taunts in silence, and, to do her justice, really thought him the finest man in the world, and was convinced that it was his right to be disagreeable to her if he chose.

She would not study German or keep up her music, but she never failed to see that his clothes were well looked after. She always ordered dinner with direct reference to his tastes and never complained if it was kept waiting until cold; though the cook usually made up for the forbearance of her mistress in this matter.

Her very humility increased his bitterness towards her. She was so willing to do everything for him—except the one thing that he cared for. Her mild, obtuse manner maddened him at times until he could have struck her. But being a gentleman, he said cutting things instead, which she heard in silence, and resented only by an occasional flush.

As the years went by, they saw less and less of each other. Gordon usually ate his meals in silence, and excused himself as soon as he had finished. But his wife never complained. There were times when he looked at her with the savage desire to rise and slay burning in his heart, she put him so deeply in the wrong. An observer, he knew, would have said: "What a brute of a man Gordon is, and what a sweet little wife he has!" There were grim lines about his mouth which marked the hours that he had spent musing upon the power of sweet little women to wreck a man's faith and hope.

No other child came to them, and the offending daughter flourished and expanded into a full-fledged young lady before he had ceased to regard her as an interloper. She had been kept out of his way as much as possible, and regarded him with a mixture of awe and pride, for middle-age had brought him an added brusqueness of manner and something very like fame in his profession: while it had returned to Mrs. Gordon in flesh whatever it had filched from her in spirit.

There was too much abstract justice in Gordon's make-up for him to ignore the fact that his behaviour to his family was outrageous. If his wife had stood up and resented it, he sometimes told himself—had shown some spirit, some independence, he would have respected her and might, in time, have become reconciled to his disappointment. But to his arrogant, outspoken nature, her humility was nauseating.

As for the child—she had grown up on the same plan, he supposed. How could he know that, though she loved her mother in a tender, protecting way, she worshipped her stern, forbidding father as one might worship a god—with fear and trembling? Didn't she always address him in a half-frightened manner, and was not her attitude a reflection of her mother's in every way? He smiled cynically as he pictured them, these two meek women, acting so absurdly as if they lived only by his gracious permission!

The son that he had dreamt of was like a dear, long lost child! Life had brought him fame and wealth—and only denied him his dearest wish. Why, then, should he complain?

Thus he argued with himself in bitter scorn—argued against the loneliness of a lifetime which, at fifty, was becoming tragic. He was growing weak—asinine, he told himself, but he could not strangle the longing for the affection of his own flesh and blood.

He sometimes lingered over dinner in these days indulging in awkward pleasantries while his wife and daughter grew flushed and pleased and a trifle nervous in their eagerness to show their appreciation of his attentions. Then he would be unusually churlish for days, from a queer shame at his own self-consciousness in their presence.

His daughter, he noticed, resembled him. It was the day after this fact fixed his attention that he invited her to go to the theatre with him. There was ripple of subdued excitement in the house at this which annoyed him almost beyond endurance. He would have liked them to act as if he had been a model father from her infancy upwards.

He was beginning to feel a shy interest in her, an interest which he was not yet ready to admit to himself and which it went against his pride to have them notice. After all, she was his child—his daughter. Once he repeated the words softly to himself, and a queer, happy thrill went through him.

And then, one day, just as he was beginning to understand that there might, after all, be some happiness left for him in the possession of this neglected daughter, just as he had begun to feel a new pleasure in existing, there was a rap at his door, and the maid announced "Mr. Langley." Gordon suddenly remembered to have seen him at the house often of late, and a quick presentiment shot through his mind.

He should not have her! All the fierce, impetuous will power of his youth leapt up in him at once. There was no possible objection to be made to this suitor, as he knew; but he would positively refuse his consent—so easy it is for a just man to become an autocrat at times!

So Mr. Langley was dismissed, and there followed a stormy interview with his wife, the storm being upon his side and the tears and submission on hers.

"She shall never marry him, and the sooner you tell her my wishes in the matter the better," he finished curtly, as he ended the interview and retired to the library.

Pauline was strangely quiet when her mother told her. She did not burst into tears, though for a moment her face grew very pale.

"Is my father in the library?" she asked in a low, cool voice which made her mother vaguely uneasy.

"Yes, dear," she fluttered, "but it's no use pleading with him. You know how decided he is. I have never gone against his wishes—" (she spoke in perfect good faith), "and of course he knows best."

The girl looked at her mother for a moment, and something very like pity flitted across her face.

"Don't worry, mamma," she said quietly; "I am going to plead with him," and she left the room without further remark.

A gruff "Come in" answered her rap at the library door. Her father was writing, and did not look up.

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She waited patiently until the sharp, inquiring "Well?" signified that he was ready to listen to her. Her face flushed painfully at the contempt in his tones, and for the first time in her life she felt that things should not be thus between father and child. Before she could speak he addressed her peremptorily:

"I have nothing to add to what I have said to your mother. I suppose that is what you wish to see me about."

He sat back in his chair and looked at her with just a gleam of curiosity in his deep eyes. He was wondering what she would do; but of course she would retire submissively. The gleam deepened into real interest as she began to speak.

"Have you any real objection to Ralph—Mr. Langley's—character?" she asked, her voice gaining steadiness as she proceeded.

"None whatever," he replied, with bland conciseness. "I simply do not choose that he should marry my daughter."

And he turned to his desk as if the incident were closed.

"One moment!"

Her voice fairly rang out, and she seemed to grow taller as she spoke. All trace of timidity and embarrassment had vanished, and Gordon felt a queer tingling of the nerves as he watched her. Her blue eyes blazed into his with an expression as determined and indomitable as his own, but her voice was perfectly level, as she said:

"I have simply come to tell you that I shall marry whom I choose. That is a question that no human being has a right to decide for me, much less a father who has never in my life shown the slightest interest in me."

She did not move but stood looking at him with a steady, inflexible gaze in which he recognised—himself! There was no bravado in her manner, but there was something that stirred his heart as it had not been stirred for years. For a long moment they looked at each other; then the girl's lip quivered. But it was with wounded affection, not fear. For the life of him her father could not have spoken. He rose, and, with a profound bow, opened the door and held it for her to pass out.

When it was closed once more, and he was safe in the solitude of the library, an exultant smile rested on his lips.

"She has some spirit!" he murmured, half-aloud; "some pluck!" Then, after a reminiscent pause: "Why, it's almost as interesting as having a boy to deal with. Why hasn't she shown that side of her character before?" With fine inconsistency he forgot that he had never given her an opportunity.

Meantime, trembling from the reaction of her revolt, his daughter had gone to her room. She laughed hysterically as she pictured her mother's consternation at what she had done.

From what she knew of her father's character, she felt sure that the rupture was final. He would never forgive her, and she would never retract! She, too, was a Gordon! At least, there would be one more dinner in this strange home of hers—and she laughed a little bitterly and began to dress.

Her father's eyes sought hers with a satirical light in their depths as she entered the dining-room that night, but hers leapt to meet them unflinchingly. She never knew that had they avoided his by so much as a hair's-breadth, she would have lost what came to be to her in after years one of the great joys of her life—her father's loving companionship.

So she did not repent! There was a wild, triumphant joy in Gordon's heart, for he had feared that she might—that at dinner she would appear as a suppliant for his forgiveness. Here at last was a foeman worthy of his steel!

He greeted her with exaggerated politeness and held a slip of paper towards her. She took it wonderingly, looked at it for a moment, then at him, in bewilderment. It was a cheque for a hundred pounds!

"Since you are going to marry when and whom you please," he explained suavely, "it seems well that you should have a little extra money."

His tone was mocking, but by some subtle instinct, Pauline knew that she had pleased him better than she had ever done in her life before.

"Papa!" she exclaimed in a doubtful, questioning tone—"Papa!"—and then her eyes looked wistfully but fearlessly into his, and something of his nature was revealed to her—she understood! With a quick, impetuous movement she was at his side and her arms were round his neck.

Frances Wilson.

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,

inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

RESULT OF THE "FACE-MAKING" COMPETITION.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded Mr. J. Allan, of 12 Sidney Street, Glasgow, who made 792 faces altogether. A six-shilling novel has been sent to each of the following:

Mrs. J. Allan, 80 Finlay Drive, Glasgow (762); Miss K. Brock Botley, Hants (529); H. L. Pickering, 35 Ashness Road, Clapham Common (506); H. Allan, 458 Gallowgate, Glasgow (489); W. Hurley, 47 Chesholme Road, Stoke Newington, N. (482); Miss Fell, Redcot, Seaton, South Devon (463); F. Martin, Woodford Bridge, Chigwell (462); Miss H. Brown, 3 Theresa St., Blaydon-on-Tyne (440); T. Guthrie, 11 Carfin St., Govanhall, Glasgow (416); E. Fisher, 63 Bold St., Altrincham (409); J. Brandon, 29 Millman St., W.C. (406); E. W. Brand, 37 Osborne Road, Stroud Green (404); D. A. Berrie, 31 Danes Drive, Scotstown, Renfrewshire (396); W. C. Davey, jun., 3 Albert Road, Dalston (355); V. Frankenstein, 19 Tenter St., Spitalfields (343); F. M. Beck, 87 Woodstock Road, Finsbury Park, N. (331); Miss L. Jones, Loose, near Maidstone (328); Mrs. A. Chandler, 6 Upper George St., Kingstown (327); W. Tapley, 22 Leicester Road, Loughborough (327); V. McKirdy Brown, 3 Reedville, Claughton, Birkenhead (323); Miss M. Cooper, 11 Alder St., Seaforth, Liverpool (310); W. James Brown, 17 Lodge Road, Hockley, Birmingham (307); Miss T. Berry, North Lodge, Addiscombe, Croydon (306); J. Baxter, 72 Premier St., Everton, Liverpool (304); W. Atherley, 10 Park Road, Liverpool (303).

Several competitors gave numbers greater than those of the above, but their faces were quite unrecognisable.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.—MADGE MORRIS.]

"Three old Maids" are tired of single blessedness and write to ask whether they are too old to get married. They have a snug little sum of money between them, and, as the eldest is only thirty-six, they feel there ought to be a chance for them yet. Certainly, you should not give up hope, any of you; a woman is very often in her prime at thirty-six, and, in my opinion, people who marry late in life are often far happier than those who rush red hot into family cares when they are too young to understand their responsibilities.

"Baden" is nineteen and in love. He does not want to marry till he is two or three and twenty, but his friends are warning him about long courtships. Should he marry now?———Certainly you should wait. Do not mind what other people tell you. Long courtships are more often good than evil, as they enable a young couple to put their love to the test of time, and whether the result is a breaking off or marriage, the long courtship will have proved good. If the pair break it off, through tiring of each other, or seeing unsuspected faults, then is it not better that they should find it out before tying themselves together for life? And if you do marry at the end of the time, your long devotion to each other will prove that yours was an ideal love match.

"Madge."—I very much sympathise with you, but I fear the fact that he visits the other girl so constantly, and is so reserved about it, rather suggests that his affection for you has waned. One can generally tell this when told that anyone's love for you is "just the same." Those words have an ominous ring, and generally mean that while he still thinks you are a most charming and attractive girl, there is somebody else who—well, whom he is *in love* with. I should advise you to take no further steps in the matter, beyond telling him that while he continues these visits, all must be regarded as over between you. If he really loves you, that will soon bring him to his senses, and if, after all, he is merely flirting with the other girl, as is very likely the case, he will soon drop it.

You tell me, "Anxious One," you were introduced to a young man at a bazaar, and went out with him several times, and then you found that he was going out with other young women as well. You said you would have nothing more to do with him if he was going to treat you like that. He now makes mischief with everyone you go out with. You ask if I consider it a right spirit for any young man to have. No; I think he must be a very mean, despicable young man. You were quite right to give him up. Your letters are no trouble; write as often as you like. I am only too pleased to be able to help you.

"Nom de Plume."—I do not understand from your letter whether the lady said she was fond of the other man or not. If so, I should advise you to be firm, and to let her see that you will not allow any further communication between them if she is to be your wife. If you were a young man, I should advise you against marrying a woman who received attentions from a married man, but as you are a widower advanced in years, and she is a widow, things may be looked at in a more practical light, and as you are fond of her and know she will make a good wife, I should just come to a good understanding with her about the other man, and get her to definitely renounce him.

You say, "Tyro," that you are soon to meet the young lady for the first time, having as yet only known each other by sight, and you want to know how to conduct yourself.———I should begin by saying how long you have been wishing to meet her, and how strange it is that those you are most anxious to know seem the farthest off. You should say this in a nice tender way, without any formality. As she is a schoolmistress, you won't find it so difficult to talk and interest her. She must be educated and well read, and be more or less interested in her work. There you have a chance of winning her appreciation by talking about books and her experiences. Do not appear embarrassed, but be quite natural. School-mistresses are sensible girls and hate nonsense. They like a man to be himself. You say she cycles. Well, find out which roads she likes best, and make it your business to be pretty often on them yourself. Also, why not ask her to come for a ride? A man has more chance of showing attention to a girl on a cycle ride than elsewhere. Besides, the charm of the country after her confinement in a schoolroom will put her in just the right sort of mood for your purpose. Above all, be sure you are really fond of her before going too far.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXI.

Of the Bargain that St. Auban Drove with My Lord Cardinal.

FROM the wounded man's bedside I wended my steps back to the Rue St. Antoine, resolved to start for Blois that very night; and beside me walked Montrésor, with bent head, like a man deep in thought.

At my door I paused to take my leave of the lieutenant, for I was in haste to have my preparations made and to be gone. But Montrésor appeared not minded to be dismissed thus easily.

"What plan have you formed?" he asked.

"The only one there is to form—to set out for Canaples at once."

"Hum!" he grunted, and again was silent. Then suddenly throwing back his head, "By Heaven!" he cried, "I care not what comes of it, I'll tell you what I know. Lead the way to your chamber, M. de Luynes, and delay your departure until you have heard me."

Surprised as much by his words as by the tones in which he uttered them, which was that of a man who is angry with himself, I passively did as I was bidden.

Once within my little ante-chamber, he turned the key with his own hands, and pointing to the door of my bedroom—

"In there, Monsieur," quoth he, "we shall be safe from listeners."

Deeper grew my astonishment at all this mystery as we passed into the room beyond.

"Now, M. de Luynes," he cried, flinging down his hat, "for no apparent reason I am about to commit treason. I am about to betray the hand that pays me."

"If no reason exists, why do so evil a deed?" I inquired calmly. "I have learnt during our association to wish you well, Montrésor; if by telling me that which your tongue burns to tell, you shall have cause for shame, the door is yonder. Go before harm is done, and leave me alone to fight my battle out."

He stood up, and for a moment he seemed to waver; then dismissing his doubts with an abrupt gesture, he sat down again.

"There is no wrong in what I do. Right is with you, M. de Luynes, and if I break faith with the might I serve, it is because that might is an unjust one; I do but betray the false to the true, and there can be little shame in such an act. Moreover, I have a reason—but let that be."

He was silent for a moment then he resumed—

"Most of that which you have learnt from Malpertuis to-night I myself could have told you. Yes, St. Auban has carried Canaples' letter to the Cardinal already. I heard from his lips to-day, for I was present at the interview, how the document had been wrested from Malpertuis. For your sake, so that you might learn all he knew, I sought the fellow out, and having found him in the Rue des Tournelles, I took you thither."

In a very fever of excitement I listened.

"To take up the thread of the story where Malpertuis left off, let me tell you that St. Auban sought an audience with Mazarin this morning, and by virtue of a note which he desired an usher to deliver to his Eminence, he was admitted, the first of all the clients that for hours had thronged the ante-room. As in the instance of the audience to Eugène de Canaples, so upon this occasion did it chance that the Cardinal's fears touching St. Auban's purpose had been aroused, for he bade me stand behind the curtains in his cabinet.

"The Marquis spoke bluntly enough, and with rude candour he stated that since Mazarin had failed to bring the Canaples estates into his family by marriage, he came to set before his Eminence a proof so utter of Canaples' treason that it would enable him to snatch the estates by confiscation. The Cardinal may have been staggered by St. Auban's bluntness, but his avaricious instincts led him to stifle his feelings, and bid the Marquis to set this proof before him. But St. Auban had a bargain to drive—a preposterous one, methought. He demanded that in return for his delivering into the hands of Mazarin the person of Armand de Canaples together with an incontestable proof that the Chevalier was in league with the *Frondeurs*, and had offered to place a large sum of money at their disposal, he was to receive as recompense the demesne of Canaples on the outskirts of Blois together with one-third of the confiscated estates. At first Mazarin gasped at his audacity, then laughed at him, whereupon St. Auban politely craved his Eminence's permission to withdraw. This the Cardinal however refused him, and bidding him remain, he sought to bargain with him. But the Marquis replied that he was unversed in the ways of trade and barter, and that he had no mind to enter into them. From bargaining the Cardinal passed on to threatening, and from threatening to whining and so on until in the end, St. Auban preserving a firm demeanour, the comedy was played out and Mazarin fell in with his proposals and terms."

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "And has St. Auban set out?"

"He starts to-morrow and I go with him. When finally the Cardinal had consented, the Marquis demanded and obtained from him a promise in writing, signed and sealed by Mazarin, that he should receive a third of the Canaples estates and the demesne on the outskirts of Blois in exchange for the body of Armand de Canaples, dead or alive, and a proof of treason sufficient to warrant his arrest and the confiscation of his estates. Next, seeing in what regard the Seigneur is held by the people of Blois, and fearing that his arrest might be opposed by many of his adherents, the Marquis has demanded

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a troop of twenty men. This Mazarin has also granted him, intrusting the command of the troop to me, under St. Auban. Further, the Marquis has stipulated that the greatest secrecy is to be observed, and has expressed his purpose of going upon this enterprise *disguised and masked*; for, as he rightly opines, when months hence he enters into possession of the demesne of Canaples in the character of purchaser, did the Bloisois recognise in him the man who sold the Chevalier, his life would stand in hourly peril."

I heard him through patiently enough; yet, when he stopped, my pent-up feelings burst all bonds, and I resolved there and then to go in quest of that Judas, St. Auban, and made an end of his plotting for all time. But Montrésor restrained me, showing me how futile such a course must prove, and how I risked losing all chance of aiding those at Canaples.

He was right. First I must warn the Chevalier; afterwards I would deal with St. Auban.

Someone knocked at that moment, and with the entrance of Michelot my talk with Montrésor came perforce to an end. For Michelot brought me the news that for days I had been waiting—Madame de Chevreuse had returned to Paris at last.

But for Montrésor's remonstrances it is likely that I should have set out forthwith to wait upon her. I permitted myself, however, to be persuaded that the lateness of the hour would render my visit unwelcome, and so I determined in the end, albeit grudgingly, to put off my departure for Blois until the morrow.

Noon had but struck from Notre Dame next day as I mounted the steps of the Hotel de Luynes. My swagger and that brave suit of pearl-grey velvet with its silver lace bore me unchallenged past the gorgeous Swiss who stood majestic in the doorway. But for the first mincing lackey I chanced upon, more was needed to gain me an audience. And so, as I did not choose to speak my name, I drew a ring from my finger, and bade him bear it to the Duchess.

He obeyed me in this, and presently returning, he bowed low and begged of me to follow him; for, as I had thought, albeit Madame de Chevreuse might not know to whom that ring belonged, yet the arms of Luynes carved upon the stone had sufficed to insure an interview.

I was ushered into a pretty boudoir, hung in blue and gold, which overlooked the garden, and wherein, reclining upon a couch, with a book of Bois-Robert's verses in her white and slender hand, I found my beautiful aunt.

Of this famous lady who was the cherished friend and more than sister of Anne of Austria, much has been written—much that is good, and more, far more, that is ill; for those who have a queen for friend shall never lack for enemies. But those who have praised and those who have censured have at least been at one touching her marvellous beauty. At the time whereof I write, it is not possible that she could be less than forty-six, and yet her figure was slender and shapely, and still endowed with the grace of girlhood; her face delicate of tint, and little marked by time, or even by the sufferings to which, in the late king's reign, Cardinal de Richelieu had subjected her; her eyes were blue and peaceful as a summer sky; her hair was the colour of ripe corn. He would be a hardy guesser who set her age at so much as thirty.

My appearance she greeted by letting fall her book, and lifting up her hands—the loveliest in France—she uttered a little cry of surprise.

"Is it really you, Gaston?" she asked. Albeit it was growing wearisome to be thus greeted by all to whom I showed myself, yet I studied courtesy in my reply, and then, 'neath the suasion of her kindliness, I related all that had befallen me since first I had journeyed to Blois in Andrea de Mancini's company, withholding, however, all allusions to my feelings towards Yvonne. Why betray them, when they

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were doomed to be stifled in the breast that begat them? But Madame de Chevreuse had not been born a woman and lived six and forty years to no purpose.

"And this maid with as many suitors as Penelope, is she very beautiful?" she inquired slyly.

"France does not hold her equal!" I answered, falling like a simpleton into the trap she had set me.

"This to me?" quoth she archly. "Oh, fie, Gaston! Your evil ways have taught you as little gallantry as dissimulation." And her merry ripple of laughter showed me how in six words I had betrayed that which I had been at such pains to hide.

But before I could, by protestations, plunge deeper than I stood already, the Duchess turned the conversation adroitly to the matter of the letter of hers wherein she had bidden me wait upon her.

A cousin of mine, one Marion de Luynes, who like myself had, through the evil of his ways, become an outcast from his family, was lately dead. Unlike me, however, he was no adventurous soldier of fortune, but a man of peace, with an estate in Provence that had a rent-roll of five thousand livres a year. On his deathbed he had cast about him for an heir, unwilling that his estates should swell the fortunes of the family that in life had disowned him. Into his ear some kindly angel had whispered my name, and the memory that I had shared with him the frown of our house, and that my plight must be passing pitiful, had set up a bond of sympathy between us which had led him to will his lands to me. Of Madame de Chevreuse, who clearly was the patron saint of those of her first husband's nephews who chanced to tread ungodly ways, my cousin Marion had besought that she should see to the fulfilment of his last wishes.

My brain reeled beneath the first shock of that unlooked-for news. Already I saw myself transformed from a needy adventurer into a gentleman of fortune, and methought my road to Yvonne lay open, all obstacles removed. But swiftly there followed the thought of my own position; and truly it seemed that a cruel irony lay in the matter wherein things had fallen out, since did I declare myself to be alive, and claim the Provence estates, the Cardinal's claws would be quick to seize me.

Thus much I told Madame de Chevreuse; but her answer cheered me, and said much for my late cousin's prudence.

"Nay," she cried. "Marion was ever shrewd. Knowing that men who live by the sword, as you have lived, are often wont to die by the sword, and that suddenly at times, he has made provision that in the event of your being dead his estates shall come to me, who have been the most indulgent of his relatives. This, my dear Gaston, has already taken place, for we believed you dead; and therein fortune has been kind to you, for now, while receiving the revenues of your lands, which the world will look upon as mine, I shall contrive that they reach you wherever you may be, until such a time as you may elect to come to life again."

Now, but for the respect in which I held her, I could have taken the pretty Duchess in my arms and kissed her.

Restraining myself, however, I contented myself by kissing her hand, and told her of the journey I was going, then craved another boon of her. No matter what the issue of that journey, and whether I went alone or accompanied, I was determined to quit France and repair to Spain. There I would abide until the Parliament, the Court, or the knife of some chance assassin, or even nature herself, should strip Mazarin of his power.

Now at the Court of Spain it was well-known that my aunt's influence was vast, and so the boon I craved was that she should aid me to a position in the Spanish service that would allow me during my exile to find occupation and perchance renown. To this my aunt most graciously acceded; and when at length I took my leave, with such gratitude in my heart that what words I could think of seemed but clumsily to express it, I bore in the breast of my doublet a letter to Don Juan de Cordova, a noble of great prominence at the Spanish Court, and in the pocket of my knickerbockers a purse of two hundred gold pistoles, as welcome as they were heavy.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of my Second Journey to Canaples.

AN hour after I quitted the Hotel de Luynes, Michelot and I left Paris by the barrier St. Michel and took the Orleans road. How different it looked in the bright June sunshine from the picture which it had presented to our eyes on that February evening, four months ago, when last we had set out upon that same journey!

Not only in nature had a change been wrought, but in my very self. My journey then had been aimless, and I had scarcely known whither I was bound nor had I fostered any great concern thereon. Now I rode in hot haste, with a determined purpose, a man of altered fortunes and altered character.

Into Choisy we clattered at a brisk pace, but at the sight of the inn of the *Connetable* such memories surged up, that I was forced to draw rein and call for a cup of Anjou, which I drank in the saddle. Thereafter we rode without interruption through Longjumeau, Arpajon, and Etrechy, and so well did we use our horses that as night fell we reached Etampes.

From inquiries that Michelot had made on the road we learnt that no troop such as that which rode with St. Auban had lately passed that way, so that 'twas clear we were in front of them.

But scarce had we finished supper in the little room which I had hired at the *Gros Paon*, when, from below, a stamping of hoofs, the jangle of arms, and the shouts of many men told me that we were overtaken.

Clearly I did not burn with a desire to linger; but, rather it seemed to me, that although night had closed in, black and moonless, we must set out again, and push on to Monnerville, albeit our beasts were worn, and the distance a good three leagues.

With due precaution we effected our departure, and there after had a spur been needed to speed us on our way, that spur we had in the knowledge that St. Auban came close upon our heels. At Monnerville we slept, and next morning we were early afoot; by four o'clock in the afternoon we had reached Orleans, whence, with fresh horses, we pursued our journey as far as Meung, where we lay that night.

There we were joined by a sturdy rascal whom Michelot enlisted into my service, seeing that not only did my means allow, but the enterprise upon which I went might perchance demand another body-servant. This recruit was a swart, powerfully-built man, of about my own age; trusty, and a lover of hard knocks, as Michelot, who had long counted him among his friends, assured me. He owned the euphonious name of Abdon.

I spent twenty pistoles in suitable raiment and a horse for him, and as we left Meung next day the knave cut a brave enough figure, that added not a little to my importance to have at my heels.

This, however, so retarded our departure, that night had fallen by the time we reached Blois. Still our journey had been a passing swift one. We had left Paris on a Monday the fourth of June—I have good cause to remember, since on that day I entered both upon my thirty-second year and my altered fortunes. On the evening of Wednesday we reached Blois, having covered a distance of forty-three leagues in less than three days.

Bidding Michelot carry my valise to the hostelry of the *Vigne d'Or*, and there await my coming, I called to Abdon to attend me, and rode on, jaded and travel-stained though I was, to Canaples, realising fully that there was no time to lose.

Old Guilbert, who came in answer to my knock at the door of the Château, looked askance when he beheld me; and when I bade him carry my compliments to the Chevalier, with the message that I desired immediate speech of him on a matter of the gravest moment, he shook his grey head and protested that it would be futile to obey me. Yet in the end, when I had insisted, he went upon my errand, but only to return with a disturbed countenance, to tell me that the Chevalier refused to see me.

"But I must speak to him, Guilbert," I exclaimed, setting

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foot upon the top step. "I have travelled expressly from Paris."

The man stood firm and again shook his head.

"I beseech you not to insist, Monsieur; M. le Chevalier has sworn to dismiss me if I permit you to set foot within the Château."

"Good Heavens! This is madness! I seek to serve him," I cried, my temper rising fast. "At least, Guilbert, will you tell Mademoiselle that I am here, and that I——"

"I may carry no more messages for you, Monsieur," he broke in. "Listen! There is M. le Chevalier."

In reality I could hear the old knight's voice, loud and shrill with anger; and a moment later, Louis, his manservant, came across the hall.

"Guilbert," he commanded harshly, "close the door; the night air is keen."

My cheeks aflame with anger, I still made one last attempt to gain an audience.

"Master Louis," I exclaimed, "will you do me the favour to tell M. de Canaples——?"

"You are wasting time, Monsieur," he interrupted. "M. de Canaples will not see you. He bids you close the door, Guilbert."

"By Heaven! He shall see me!"

"The door, Guilbert!"

I took a step forward, but before I could gain the threshold the door was slammed in my face; and as I stood there, quivering with anger and disappointment, I heard the bolts being shot within.

I turned with an oath.

"Come, Abdon," I growled, as I climbed once more into the saddle. "let us leave the fool to the fate he has chosen."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Of how St. Auban Came to Blois.

In silence we rode back to Blois. Not that I lacked matter for conversation. Anger and chagrin at the thought that I had come upon this journey to earn naught but an insult and to have a door slammed in my face made my gorge rise until it went near to choking me. I longed to revile Canaples aloud; but Abdon's was not the ear into which I might pour the hot words that welled up to my lips.

Yet, if silent, the curses that I heaped upon the Chevalier's crassness were none the less fervent, and to myself I thought with grim relish of how soon and how dearly he would pay for the affront he had put upon me.

That satisfaction, however, endured not long; for presently I bethought me of how heavily the punishment would fall upon Yvonne, and yet of how she would be left to the mercy of St. Auban, whom the warrant from Mazarin would invest with almost any and every power at Canaples.

I ground my teeth at the sudden thought, and for a moment I was on the point of going back and forcing my way into the Château, at the sword point if necessary, to warn and save the Chevalier in spite of himself, and unthanked.

It was not in such a fashion that I had thought to see my mission to Canaples accomplished; I had dreamt of gratitude, and gratitude unbars the door to much. Nevertheless, whether or not I earned it, I must return and succeed where, for want of insistence, I had failed a while ago.

Of a certainty I should have acted thus, but that at the very moment upon which I formed the resolution Abdon drew my attention to a dark shadow by the roadside, not twenty paces in front of us. This proved to be the motionless figure of a horseman.

So soon as I was assured of it, I reined in my horse, and taking a pistol from the holster I levelled it at the shadow, accompanying the act with a sonorous, "Who goes there?"

The shadow stirred, and Michelot's voice answered me:

"'Tis I, Monsieur. They have arrived. I came to warn you."

"Who have arrived?" I shouted.

"The soldiers. They are lodged at the *Lys de France*."

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A medical authority has recently advanced a very strange theory. It is that persons who suffer from rheumatism, neuralgia, and gout, are saved thereby from catching common illnesses. The acid in the blood which causes these ailments prevents the development of other diseases. However this may be we imagine that sufferers from rheumatism would be glad to get rid of it and would take the risk of contracting other illnesses. Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are an unfailing cure for neuralgia and rheumatism and a proof of their efficacy against the latter ailment is proved by the case of Mr. John Griffiths, the Steward of the Oswestry Conservative Club. He says:—"Three years ago I contracted typhoid fever. For six long months I was as weak as a child. After that I gradually began to recover strength, but only very slowly, and I found that the disease has left me with rheumatism in its most acute form. My legs and feet became so stiff that it amounted to absolute torture to walk about. My back was weak also, and what with the weakness and rheumatism I began to think seriously that I should have to retire from active life altogether.

"All this time I was being regularly attended by my doctor, but he did not seem to be able to pull me together again. My brother, who lives in Middleton-in-Teesdale, sent me a box of Charles Forde's Bile Beans, and I tried them as I had done other medicines. But they proved widely different. By the time the first box was done I found to my great pleasure that they had given me considerable relief. The pains and the stiffness were not nearly so severe. I got a second box, and the good I had reaped was still further increased. I persevered with them, and, to cut a long story of gradual yet effective recovery short, after taking four boxes I was completely freed from rheumatism. What is better still, it has gone for good.

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ONE PENNY.

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An oath was the only comment I made as I turned the news over in my mind. I must return to Canaples.

Then another thought occurred to me. The Chevalier was capable of going to extremes to keep me from entering his house; he might, for instance, greet me with a blunderbuss. It was not the fear of that which deterred me, but the fear that did a charge of lead get mixed with my poor brains before I had said what I went to say, matters would be no better and there would be one poor knave the less to adorn the world.

"What shall we do, Michelot?" I groaned, appealing in my despair to my henchman.

"Might it not be well to seek speech with M. de Montrésor?" quoth he.

I shrugged my shoulders. Nevertheless, after a moment's deliberation, I determined to make an attempt. If I succeeded, something might come of it.

And so I pushed on to Blois, with my knaves close at my heels.

Up the Rue Vieille we proceeded with caution, for the hostelry of the *Vigne d'Or*, where Michelot had hired me a room, fortunately overlooking the street, fronted the *Lys de France*, where St. Auban and his men were housed.

I gained that room of mine without mishap, and my first action was to deal summarily with a fat and well-roasted capon which the landlord set before us, for an empty stomach is a poor comrade in a desperate situation. That meal, washed down with the best part of a bottle of red Anjou, did much to restore me alike in body and in mind.

From my open window I gazed across the street at the *Lys de France*. The door of the common room, opening upon the street, was set wide, and across the threshold came a flood of light, in which there flitted the black figures of maybe a dozen amazed rustics, drawn thither for all the world as bats are drawn to a glare.

And there they hovered, with open mouths and stupid eyes, harkening to the din of voices that floated out on the tranquil air, the snatches of ribald songs, the raucous bursts of laughter, the clink of glasses, the clank of steel, the rattle of dice, and the strange soldier oaths that fell with every throw, and which to them must have sounded almost as words of some foreign tongue.

While I stood by my window, the landlord entered my room, and, coming up to me. "Thank heaven they are not housed at the *Vigne d'Or*," he said. "It will take Maître Bernard a week to rid his house of the stench of leather. They are part of a stray company that is on its way to fight the Spaniards," he informed me; "but methinks they will be forced to spend two or three days at Blois. Their horses are sadly jaded, and will need that rest before they can take the road again, thanks to the pace at which their boy of an officer must have led them. There is a gentleman with them who wears a mask. 'Tis whispered that he is a prince of the blood, who has made a vow not to uncover his face until this war be ended, in expiation of some sin committed in mad Paris."

I heard him in silence, and when he had done, I thanked him for his information. So, this was the story that the crafty St. Auban had spread abroad to lull suspicion touching the real nature of their presence, until their horses should be fit to undertake the return journey to Paris, or until he should have secured the person of M. de Canaples.

(*To be continued.*)

A Book Worth Reading.

An interesting historical novel has just been written by Mr. George C. Wallis (an old contributor to *Short Stories*), under the title "The Children of the Sphinx." The hero is a son of Rameses, King of Egypt, who goes through a number of startling adventures in Egypt, Syria, and on the Great Sea. It is a stirring story, and is well worth the six shillings asked for it

Long, Indeed!

Bessie: "He was very impudent. He put his arm round me twice." Jessie: "My! What a long arm he must have!"

To Keep the Orders.

Widower (to son): "I don't like that girl you want to marry, Charlie." Son: "I'm glad to hear it, guv'nor. Now I know I haven't any cause to be jealous."

How to Do It.

Flora (who has aspirations): "Don't you think women can do a great deal to elevate the stage?" Ted: "It wouldn't be necessary if they'd lower their hats."

An Heirloom.

Brace: "Among my dearest treasures is the watch my father carried when he was a young man." Bagley: "Would you mind letting me see it?" Brace: "Certainly not, but it is temporarily in the possession of my —er—father's brother."

Selfish Papa.

Little Nell: "I don't like my papa one bit. He's awful selfish." Mamma: "Is he?" Little Nell: "Yes. He nearly sat down on my dollie, an' then, instead of takin' another chair, he took her chair right away from her, an' left her on the hard floor."

Her First Chance.

He (accepted): "You say you were never engaged before?" She: "Yes." He: "How does that happen? I thought all women usually had three or four engagements." She (guilelessly): "Well, I presume I shall, too. You see, this is the first chance I've had."

Never Se n the Carrots.

A young married lady was explaining the difference between silver and electro to a small domestic, and said: "Mary, you will always find a 'lion' on anything that is real silver." "Yes, mum," said Mary, "I'll remember, and I've heard say as there is always carrots on gold, though I ain't seen them."

Making Orders Sure.

Junior Partner: "Well, I think" (puff) "I'll go out in the trade and see if I can get a few orders (puff, puff). Senior Partner: "That's right. Don't fail to take along some of those cigars you smoke and offer them to people." Junior Partner: "What for?" Senior Partner: "So the buyers will die before they have time to cancel the orders."

Getting Full Directions.

"Now be careful how you drive, cabby, and go slowly over the stones, for I hate to be shaken. And mind you pull up at the right house, and look out for those dreadful railway vans," said the nervous old gentleman. "Never fear, sir," said cabby, "I'll do my best. And which orsepital would you like to go to in case of an accident."

We Have Seen It.

The flannel shirt is a great institution. When it is brought home the proud husband and father dons it and goes forth to defy the sweltering heat of a July day. The next week it is washed, and then it is just about the size for the twelve-year-old son. Another week rolls round and it is a perfect fit for the baby. The fourth week it descends to Betsy's doll, and the fifth week it vanishes altogether—disappears mysteriously. It was seen to go into the wash-tub, but that was the last of it. It never came out. It had shrunk away to nothing.

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WHY THIS FALSE SHAME?

"TELL me of what you are ashamed, and I will tell you what you are." There are some things of which one ought to be ashamed, whilst there are others of which one should be ashamed of being ashamed. False shame is a robber. It takes from us our pleasures, joys, and rightful inheritances, and gives us nothing in return. Is a woman ashamed of desiring beauty or a man of acquiring strength? According to the publishers of Professor Boyd Laynard's great work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE, there are hundreds of thousands of such cases. In a recent interview with the publishers the following statement was made: "It is perfectly astounding the thousands of letters we are receiving from the public requesting us to send Professor Laynard's work privately packed! Of course we have always made a custom of doing so; but why people should be ashamed of receiving such a book is beyond our comprehension and very uncomplimentary to the Professor, who is the greatest living authority upon personal hygiene. But for all this, the sale of his work in the English language is rapidly approaching one million copies. Hindustani and Malayalam are among the latest translations of Professor Laynard's famous book."

A REMARKABLE OFFER.

The publishers have issued a complete edition, at a price within the reach of all, so that the book may find a place in every home. The work is arranged in 127 chapters, the whole of which (in the popular edition now offered to the public) is bound in one volume. The book, although published at Two Shillings, will, if ordered direct from the Publishers, be forwarded to readers of SHORT STORIES, carriage paid, at the low discount price of

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

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Among the numerous subjects dealt with, the following are but few. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS**, enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the Publishers:—

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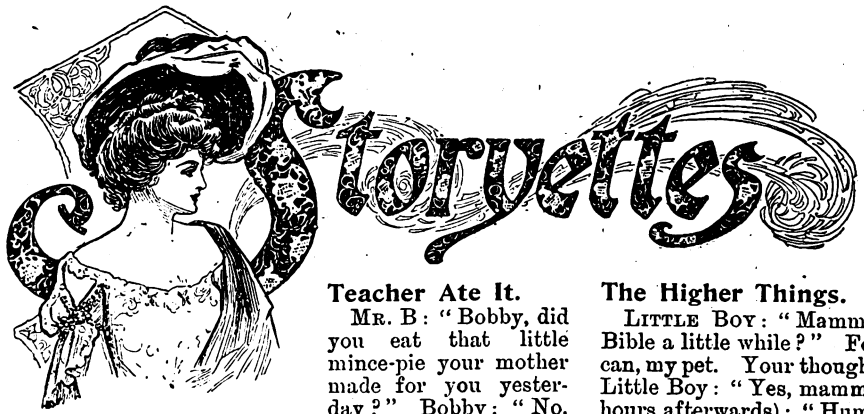

Teacher Ate It.

Mr. B: "Bobby, did you eat that little mince-pie your mother made for you yesterday?" Bobby: "No, sir. I gave it to my teacher." Mr. B.: "Did she eat it?" Bobby: "I fancy so. There wasn't any school to-day."

Wanted to be Truthful.

Landlord Hooks: "Can you refer me to a work where I can learn how the ancients constructed those catapults that would throw stones half-a-mile?" Friend: "Don't believe I can. Why do you want such information?" Hooks: "Well, you see, I've advertised that this house is within a stone's throw of the railway station, and now I have got to rig up some plan for throwing that stone."

A Kind Wish.

An English traveller arrived in Dublin, from London, on a terribly wet and stormy night, and, calling a car, bade the driver hasten to his hotel. Arrived there he asked the driver his fare, and being struck by the fact that the sum stated was only the regulation amount, he gave the man a shilling for himself, thinking he deserved a tip on such a disagreeable evening. The jarvey looked at the money and then to the traveller's amused astonishment ejaculated: "Thank your honour; may the angels fetch your honour half-an-hour before the divil knows you're dead."

Not What He Expected.

"Ma wants two pounds of butter exactly like what you sent us last. If it ain't exactly like that she won't take it," said the small boy. The grocer turned to his numerous customers and remarked, blandly: "Some people in my business don't like particular customers, but I do. It's my delight to serve them and get them what they want. I will attend to you in a moment, little boy." "Be sure to get the same kind. A lot of pa's relations is visiting at our house, and ma doesn't want 'em to come again," the small boy explained.

He Had to Tell.

Johnny came home from school several times within a month with various bruises on his face and body, received in fights with his schoolmates, and on the last occasion his mother threatened him with severe punishment if he ever engaged in a fight again. Only a few days after the lad appeared with a black eye, and, scared by the stern maternal greeting, "Well, sir?" he departed from his usual truthful ways, and stammered: "I fell down and hit my head on a stone." "And which got the worst of it?" asked his big brother. "Oh, the other fellow," answered Johnny, briskly. "He's gone home with two black eyes."

Good for Trade.

"For outdoor exercise," said a bicyclist, "there is nothing to be compared with bicycle-riding. It develops and strengthens every muscle in the body. Physicians all over the country warmly recommend it." "Yes," was the reply, "I suppose they do, and surgeons also."

The Higher Things.

Little Boy: "Mamma, may I have that big family Bible a little while?" Fond Mamma: "Of course you can, my pet. Your thoughts are on higher things, I see." Little Boy: "Yes, mamma." Bridget (to herself, two hours afterwards): "Humph! More of that jam gone. I don't see how that boy reached it."

Bad Luck.

"What's the matter, Bromley?" "I've recovered my portmanteau." "I don't see why you should use such language about it." "Oh, you don't, eh! The thing isn't worth 10s., and it turns up just when the railway company was about to allow me £10 for it. It's just my luck."

Wasted Goodness.

"Mother, I can never win the medal for good behaviour," exclaimed a boy just from school. "I've tried and tried, but some other fellow always gets it." "But you must keep on trying," said his mother encouragingly. "It's no use," replied the boy. "I shan't try any more. It's a clean waste of goodness."

Noble Boy.

"Willie," said his mother, "your clothes are wet; you've been in the water." "Yes," said little Willie, bravely, "I went in and saved little Charlie Stebbins." "My noble boy!" said his fond mother, "did you jump in after him?" "No, mamma," said little Willie, proudly. "I jumped in first so as to be there when he fell in."

He Didn't Go After It.

Johnnie had been out in the yard playing with his ball, and suddenly came in and sat down to read. His father looked up, and, seeing that Johnnie had his Sunday-school book in his hand, thought it time to question him. "What did you do with the ball?" "It went over the wall into Mr. Brown's yard." "Did you go after it?" "No, pa." "Why not?" "Because it went through the window."

Insufficient Data.

As a pedestrian tourist was lately proceeding towards Abbotsford, he asked a man who was breaking stones by the roadside how long it would take him to reach that place. The man looked at him without speaking, and then resumed his work. The question was repeated, with the same result, and at last the traveller walked on. He had not proceeded more than a hundred yards when the man called after him, and made a sign for him to return. When the pedestrian reached the stone-breaker, the latter said to him: "It will take you an hour to reach Abbotsford." "Then why did you not tell me so at first?" asked the traveller. "Why," said the man, "it was necessary for me to see at what rate you walked; and, from the way you step out, I am now able to say that you will reach it in an hour."

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 43—48," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, February 24th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 43. ARITHMOREMS.

The following sets of words will form the names of towns in the United Kingdom. The figures must be turned into their Roman equivalents.

50 + A rank
51 + The
500 + Nae beer
56 + Oye
510 + Roof
1550 + Oh A
1055 + Part no whole
50 + Gog was
550 + On. No
101 + Hawk
55 + Een

No. 44. CHARADE.

My FIRST was used long years ago
In battle fierce against the foe,
My SECOND swims in the ocean free,
A fish as you will quickly see.
My WHOLE is part of a famous game
Which every boy is proud to name.

No. 45. ADDED WORDS.

Merriment, a period of time and a Roman numeral made sad sight

No. 46. REBUS.

At first, when seen, I odd appear
In every person's eye;
But make me less, I'll prove quite clear
I'm even as a die.
Diminish me a little more,
You'll find you'll then expose
What brings the days of rich and poor
Completely to a close.

No. 47. WORD FORMING.

Using all the letters in the following sentence, make the names of six breeds of dogs:

"Can little dogs in ire bark at the poets?"

No. 48. SQUARE WORD.

With the following letters make a square word:

EEE III O LLLL P SSSS

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 25 to 30.

The First Prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mr. J. Morris, of 27 Richmond Road, Oxford.

A pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

W. Martin, 8 Drum Terrace, Leith.
R. B. Earée, Miserden Rectory, Cirencester.
J. Davis, Beech Avenue Hospital, Nottingham.
Miss O. Gardner, 1 Langdon Place, Swansea.
Mrs. F. A. Gardner, 1 Langdon Place, Swansea.
R. E. Priestley, The Grammar School, Tewkesbury.
P. Brooks, 28 Kilnside Road, Paisley.
J. D. Champion, Quethiock, Liskeard.
A. Spearing, Patricroft, Manchester.
W. J. Spearing, 142 Liverpool Road, Patricroft, Manchester.

SOLUTIONS.

25. BALM.
ALOE.
LONE.
MEETING.
IRON.
NORA.
GNAT.

26. BRISTOL.

27. 8 + 2 10
12 − 2 10
5 × 2 10
20 ÷ 2 10
—
45

28. WAISTCOAT.

29. RESUSCITATE.

30. In Britain, as in America, some of the more wealthy of the upper ten, following Royal precedent, have their own luxuriously fitted-up railway saloon carriages, which have been built at enormous expense by the different railways.

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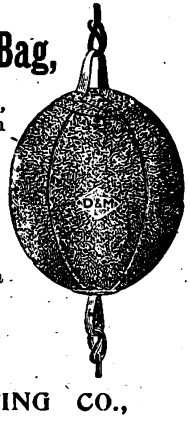

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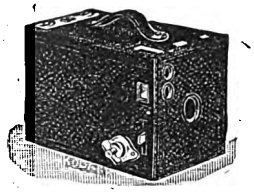

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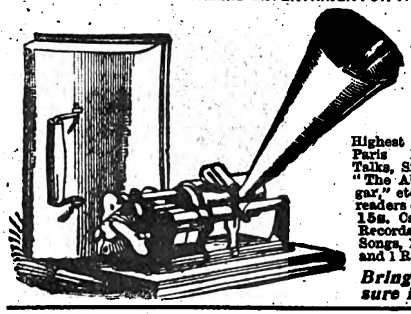

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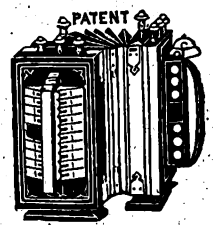

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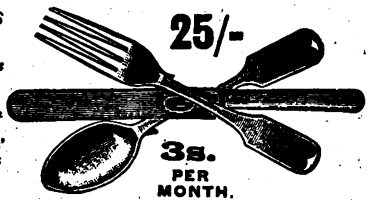

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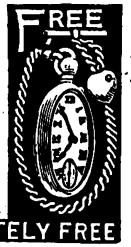

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 686.] For the Week Ending February 22nd, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

New Series. **Start To-day.**

EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

II.—THE KIRBY DIAMONDS.

KIRBY House, the town residence of Lord Kirby, was ablaze with lights.

From within came the sound of merry laughter, and the clink of well-filled glasses. Lord and Lady Kirby were entertaining their bosom friends and boon companions, at one of those small and select dinner parties for which they were, deservedly, so well famed.

To know Lord Kirby was a pleasure and an honour; not because he was a nobleman and rich, but because he was broad-minded and a cultured man. A man every one honoured and respected. He reckoned his friends not by their number, but by their worth. He could appreciate sterling qualities, and could discern between empty-pated rank and talented commonality. By no means literary, he numbered amongst his friends those most eminent in the world of letters; by no means scientific, yet the greatest scientists called him friend. Large-hearted and noble-minded, he was a fine example of what an English nobleman should be.

Lady Kirby was perhaps less broad-minded than her husband, but was nevertheless kind-hearted and genial. Very beautiful, she carried all hearts with her, and made everyone her friend. To-night Edward Farrell was one of the favoured guests.

He was an old and cherished friend of both Lord and Lady Kirby, and had first met the former when at Cambridge nearly ten years before.

Farrell looked in splendid trim. He had just returned from a late trip to Switzerland, with the blood coursing joyously through his veins, his heart beating high, and his mind free from every care. He was longing for his books and instruments again, 'tis true, but he never did things by halves, and since he had come out to dine, he meant to dine well and enjoy himself.

There was not a large company present, for Lord Kirby believed in keeping his guests at these special dinners small in number and select.

Moreover, he nearly always invited the same people, for they comprised his and his wife's closest personal friends.

On Lord Kirby's face Farrell once or twice thought he saw a fleeting look of anxiety or worry; and was surprised to find it reflected in the face of Lady Kirby. The other guests apparently noticed nothing—little wonder either—they were not all so observant as Farrell. Even he hardly thought twice about it, and soon forgot his fancies in the enticing flow of cultured talk and the sparkle of the wines.

Brighter, however, than the sparkling wines, surpassing even the sparkling eyes of the ladies, were the jewels they wore; for informal as these dinner parties were, the ladies yet loved to indulge their weakness for dazzling jewels, and displayed their possessions in good-natured rivalry.

Lady Kirby, however, stood alone and unique—for the famous Kirby diamonds were unapproachable. She wore the diamond filigree necklace only. It gleamed like a line of scintillating fire against the fair neck of the owner, and crowned her as queen over all.

Lady Dorothy Kayn—called by her friends, Lady Dolly—was the only one who in any way rivalled Lady Kirby. She devoted a great deal of her time to the best exhibition of her many gems; but their rich profusion and the lavishness of their display, palled upon one, and made one look with relief to the exquisite and dainty beauty of the Kirby necklace.

Lady Dolly knew it too. She knew that to her was

not the prize; and, alas! woman is but human—she envied her friend.

Farrell saw Lady Dolly's envious glances, and laughed good-humouredly to himself. Solomon was not so far wrong, thought he, "Vanity of vanities" truly "all is vanity."

But even the brightest of dinners must end, and this was no exception. The last course had been disposed of, the dessert discussed, and the ladies had left for the drawing-room. Now the chief and most comfortable feature of Lord Kirby's dinners was that they were free from superfluous formality.

After dinner the men had a quiet half-hour all to themselves before joining the ladies in the drawing-room.

Some adjourned to the smoking-room, others to the library, and others to the billiard-room, but all, according only to their own sweet will and fancy.

Thus, Farrell found himself *tête-à-tête* with Lord Kirby in the library.

His lordship seemed rather quiet and thoughtful. At last he said:

"Look here, Farrell. I want to ask your advice. I am pretty well worried out of my life, and my wife, in spite of her affected indifference, is much upset too. You saw the diamond necklace she was wearing to-night? Well that, as you know, is one of the famous Kirby collection, and is almost priceless. It was one of a complete set. I say was, for it is so no longer. At each of my last dinner-parties a piece has disappeared—stolen most probably. First the brooch disappeared—disappeared without leaving a trace. Lady Kirby had taken it off for a moment and placed it on her dressing-table. When she turned to pick it up again a few minutes later, it had vanished, vanished as completely as though the table had opened and swallowed it. No one had seen it. Only her friends were in the room, the same friends that are here to-night, the same as have been here each time. They are all wealthy and have nothing to gain by taking the jewels; in fact, I would rather suspect myself than them. Next time the crescent for the hair vanished—no one knows how or when. Lady Kirby fastened it in her hair before dinner and noticed it was still there when in her dressing-room shortly afterwards, yet before the evening was out it had vanished.

"The Scotland Yard people have investigated the matter—they have sent copies of my enlarged photos of the jewels all over the country—but all without result. They are completely mystified. I tried to dissuade my wife from wearing the necklace to-night—for I fear that it will vanish in some mysterious way or other. She would not hear of leaving it off, however, and the result is that altogether I feel very worried and far from happy. 'Tis all so mysterious. Where have the jewels vanished to? How? Are they stolen? Who would do such a thing? There were no servants near—outside agency is out of the question—and my friends have absolutely no motive for doing such a thing. It is strange beyond doubt. What do you think of it all?"

"Well, I must confess," said Farrell, "it does sound rather a mysterious business; but can I see the dressing-room? That is, if you can spare me another five minutes from the others. If you could manage to bring Lady Kirby too without altogether violating the laws of hospitality—it would be as well. Only make some good excuse, and do not refer openly to this business."

Lord Kirby agreed, and soon returned with his wife. Together they proceeded to the dressing-room. The hasty examination that Farrell made did not appear to yield anything of interest. At last he turned thoughtfully to Lady Kirby and said:

"Are you willing to run a risk? I have an idea that I can help you, but it will involve the temporary loss of your diamond necklace."

Lady Kirby hesitated.

"I don't understand," she said. "What do you mean?"

"Well," answered Farrell, "it comes to this—I want you to really try to lose your necklace, leave it carelessly exposed somewhere, and then trust the rest to me. I know it sounds rather mad, but, believe me, there is a method in my madness. Now, what do you say?"

"It is this that I intend to use as a bait to catch the fish."

Lady Kirby still hesitated; but her husband stepped forward.

"Do as you will, Farrell," said he, "we will put ourselves without reserve into your hands. What do you want us to do?"

Farrell had that tense, subdued expression that was so characteristic of him when he became intensely interested in anything.

"Nothing now," answered he; "but if Lady Kirby will meet me here in half-an-hour's time, I will tell her exactly how to proceed. I should like to run away now, if you will allow me, for I have forgotten an important letter—or rather you can tell the others that—*really*, I want to run round to my laboratory for a thing or two."

With a short laugh he was gone. Husband and wife stood for a moment facing each other with faces of blank bewilderment. Then they joined their guests in the drawing-room.

Within half-an-hour Farrell was back again. He made straight for the dressing-room, and was joined almost immediately by Lady Kirby, whose face expressed no small amount of wonder and curiosity. Farrell took from his pocket a small phial.

"This," he said, with a smile, "is a special alcoholic solution of phenol phthalein; and it is this that I intend to use as a bait to catch the fish."

Lady Kirby's eyes opened wide.

"But I don't understand," she said; "how will that strange named stuff help us? What am I to do?"

Farrell did not answer at once.

The empty jewel-case belonging to the necklace stood open on the table. This Farrell picked up and carefully poured some of the contents of the phial all over the inside velvet, upon which the necklace was supposed to lie.

"It won't hurt it much," said he, as Lady Kirby gave a start of dismay; besides, better that than the necklace, you know. Now I want you to bring your friends up here to-night, exactly as you did on the other occasions when you lost the other jewels. Then, quite casually take your necklace off and put it in here, on the velvet, so that whoever picks it up is bound to touch their fingers on the slightly moist surface. As you put it in I want you to manage to moisten your own fingers.

"No; it isn't poison! It won't hurt you! Don't appear to notice the case once you have left the necklace in it; watch it during the evening as you have the chance, and if it vanishes let me know. Now I think we had better join the others; we have already been away too long. What say you?"

* * * * *

Lady Kirby and her lady friends were in her dressing-room about an hour after Farrell and she had joined the others. They were discussing the latest novelties and the oldest lace. She had laughingly enticed them away from the drawing-room upon some frivolous pretext or other, amidst the loud protests of the men.

She was anxious to try Farrell's plan. Though how it was going to work she could not for the life of her see. It looked like tempting fate; and she half-feared her necklace would take to mysterious flight and baffle even the astute Farrell's endeavours to bring it back.

She was interested, however, in spite of her fears; and, after all, if Farrell—the scientist—the mystic—was so confident, why should she fear? She would do as he had told her.

So, in the midst of her chatter to Lady Vere and Lady Dolly about the latest opera, she calmly removed her necklace, and put it carelessly into the open jewel case. She pressed it down, and felt the tips of her dainty fingers slightly wet against the moistened velvet. She could hardly have told they were wet if she had not specially noticed.

Then she bustled about the room, showing her friends first one dainty piece of finery and then another; yet ever stealing a secret glance at her treasure. The time flew by, and still the case contained its priceless burden. Not yet had it winged its mysterious flight.

At last every pretext for a longer stay was exhausted. Though Lady Kirby fain would stay—she must leave her jewel to its fate.

She reluctantly led the way to the drawing-room, followed by her friends, Lady Dolly bringing up the rear.

Half-way down the stairs, however, Lady Kirby's heart misgave her. What if Farrell should fail? What if he were building his hopes on a false foundation? The thought was agonising. No—she would not risk it. she would go at once, while the necklace was still safe, and would either lock it up or wear it.

Quickly she made an excuse to return and bade the others join the gentlemen in the drawing-room. Up the stairs she flew. How her heat was beating. Never

"Oh, Mary! Mary! forgive me! I haven't stolen them."

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would she let the precious jewels out of her sight again. How foolish of her to do so now. Across the room she hastened. The jewel-case was still on the table. Thank Heaven! she was in time! Horrors! She gave a tiny shriek of dismay. The jewel-case was *empty*. She had not been away two minutes and yet the necklace had vanished completely. Lady Kirby could have cried with vexation. Controlling herself by a great effort, she ran down to the drawing-room, and at the first opportunity told Farrell in a hurried whisper what had occurred.

Farrell received the news very quietly, and told Lady Kirby to bear up, "it will come right yet," whispered he.

Then aloud he said:

"We have just been discussing spiritualism, my dear Lady Kirby, and I was advancing the opinion that spiritualistic phenomena are far more common than is supposed.

"Now what do you say," said he to the company generally, "if I volunteer to convince you all of this?"

"You would find us interested observers, I venture to say," said Lord Kirby, "even if we are not ready converts. But how do you propose to convince us?"

"Why, my dear fellow, by actually appealing to the testimony of your own eyes, to be sure. See here! I have a small phial"—and he produced one a little bigger than the first he had used—"filled with a so-called 'spiritualistic tincture.' It is supposed to have the peculiar property of revealing those in spiritual sympathy. What I propose is to try it and see for ourselves whether it is true or not. What do you say, shall I do so?"

A chorus of assent came from those around him.

"How delightful!" said one.

"Yes! Quite a spiritualistic *séance!*" echoed Lady Dolly.

Meantime Farrell had requisitioned a large glass bowl—half-filled it with water—and then, amidst the breathless attention of those around him, poured in the spiritualistic tincture.

"Now," said Farrell, "you must each pass before me and put yourselves into vital contact with the liquid, by placing both hands in it—and I warn you"—he laughingly continued—"that those whom the spirits deign to honour, will have some message from the spirit world, which will first be revealed to me, and which I promise in turn to reveal to you.

"Now, Kirby! are you ready? Suppose you open the ball. Ha! you are not one of the spirits 'elected,'" said Farrell, as Lord Kirby removed his hands from the water; "no sign marks you as chosen."

When Lady Kirby's turn came, a slow hush crept over the assembly, for the instant her hands touched the liquid, the tips of her fingers turned a brilliant red. Lady Kirby realised with a start that they were coloured exactly where they had touched the velvet. What did it mean? This, then, was part of Farrell's plan.

"Now, ye incredulous, look and believe!" said Farrell. "We will see first if any others are favoured by the spirits, and then we will try and learn their message."

The only other person affected was Lady Dolly—much to her surprise.

In her case the tips of the fingers and two or three tiny spots in the palm of the right hand turned red.

"However do you do it, Mr. Farrell?" said she; "you *must* tell us."

"You must be patient, Lady Dolly," answered he; "the important part is yet to come. We have yet to learn the spirits' message. Will you two kindly follow me to the library—if the others will pardon our absence—and we will try and give them something interesting when we return."

When they reached the library, Farrell closed the door and then turned and faced them.

"Now, Lady Dorothy," said he, "the message is *not* from the spirit world, but from *me*. I know all. Trifling is useless. *Where are Lady Kirby's diamonds?*"

Had a thunderbolt fallen in their midst—it could not have startled them more. Lady Kirby was speechless. Surely there was some frightful mistake. She looked to Lady Dolly for some explanation, some hot indignant denial. It never came. Lady Dolly, as the hard, cold, cutting words fell from Farrell's lips, turned a deadly white.

Then the colour rushed back in a swift flood to her cheeks, and throwing herself at Lady Kirby's feet, she burst into storm of tears.

"Oh, Mary! Mary! Forgive me! I haven't stolen them," she sobbed; "you know I wouldn't steal them, don't you? But I was jealous of you, Mary—they were so splendid—and I just slipped them into the ventilator, when you were not looking. Oh, Mary! Forgive me!" she moaned. "I only meant it for a time."

Lady Kirby's heart turned to stone; all these weeks of worry, all her husband's care, all through the silly jealousy of this vain girl. Not for long though, did she think thus; her heart soon opened to the miserable girl, and she freely forgave her.

"Dry your tears, dear! It is all a foolish joke!" said she. "Don't think of it any more. Now hush! there's a dear! Why, where is Mr. Farrell?" For he had slipped out as soon as he heard where the jewels were hidden.

He soon returned however with brooch, crescent and necklace in his hand.

Lady Kirby, at the sight of her recovered treasures, uttered a cry of joy.

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Farrell! How clever you are! But what about the others? and what about the spiritual *séance*? Wasn't it really a spiritual phenomenon after all?" she cried, all in one breath.

"No; I am very sorry to disappoint you!" said Farrell; "but I am afraid I depended more upon the fact that the slightest trace of phenol phthalein turns red with an alkali, than upon any spiritual agency. The rest of the plot I credit you with ingenuity enough to explain for yourself. What did I put in the water? Oh, common soda solution. An alkali, you see! Yes, that's all! But don't you think we had better join the others in the drawing-room?"

* * * * *

"Well, Farrell, we had almost given you up," said Lord Kirby. "In fact, we began to think the spirits had spirited you all away. Now let's hear the important message, for it must have been *very* important to have kept you all this time."

"It *was* important," said Farrell; "it revealed Lady Kirby's diamonds!" and he held them aloft.

"Marvellous!" they all cried out, when they could find breath enough to speak; but they did not know all.

"I think you had better get something for Lady Dolly," said Farrell; "the strain of the experiment has been great and has tried her considerably."

"Yes; you can empty the bowl, the tincture only acts once!"

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[Next week: The Secret Explosive.]

FINISHED.

"Was Mrs. Vane's *musicale* interesting?" The query was half-ironical.

"Very! I met a delightful Irish girl. She told me her whole history in twenty minutes."

"I've noticed that confidences always attract you."

Maud Rayburn smiled with raised eyebrows at this. She and Howard Russell was walking very slowly along Kensington High Street. It was a hot August afternoon, and the street was almost deserted. Miss Rayburn's fashionable gown was a cool blue in colour, and she wore a sailor hat primly parallel with her eyebrows. Thus far her attire was conventional, but she allowed herself the liberty of having no gloves in sight, and she made frequent noticeable gestures with her bare jewelled hands.

Her companion's tall figure was slightly stooping, and his smoothly shaven face was full of character and decision. There was apparent in their attitude towards each other, a certain freedom, which only long acquaintance can give, but which had not yet lost its piquancy through too exact knowledge of each other's characteristics.

"Well," remarked Miss Rayburn, at length stooping to defend herself, "why shouldn't I be interested in people's confidences? That's a part of the business of a 'literary sprinter,' as those of my craft are called."

This remark seemed to be convincing, for Howard Russell did not speak for some time. A short, deep cleft became visible between his eyebrows, and he shifted his gaze from the pavement in front of them to a point some distance down the street. At last he broke out:

"I can conceive of nothing more wearisome than eternally examining people from an artistic point of view. The study of character way be necessary to your business——"

"Please call it my art," interrupted Miss Raymond beseechingly.

"But I should think you would feel after a while that you didn't have any of your own. One's own personality must be lost sight of in the everlasting search for mental and moral abnormalities—I'm glad I prefer insects; I think yours is an unhealthy occupation."

"How delightfully frank and unflattering."

She turned a laughing face towards him.

"You are greatly mistaken if you think I'm not interested in myself and my own abnormalities, as you call them. I'm far too egotistical. I have put myself, or rather, parts of me, into a great many of my stories, and I find that by making the most of one characteristic at a time I shall be able to provide myself with material for some years to come. And let me tell you, sir, I will have my revenge for the remarks you've made—I'll put you in a story too."

"With a part of you in it," he jeered. Then his face changed. "No; you are not to do that, Maud."

"Why am I not?"

"Because you wouldn't be able to do justice to your subject; you don't know me so well as you think you do."

"Depths yet unfathomed——"

"I'll own we're good friends, but, my faith! you don't find out the whole of a man in a few walks like this. Especially a woman doesn't. So I think you would be better not to try to make use of me in that way."

"Till I know you better!"

Her eyes were smiling, and her lips; her whole face was awake, animated, full of intense interest. It was the most subtle flattery that look of hers.

"Not then; pardon my egotism. You shall never know me well enough to put me down in pen strokes. Or rather, I hope you will know me too well."

She did not look at him, but at the pansies fastened in her dress, and her smile did not fade.

"You have chosen a horribly cold-blooded way of getting fame," he went on after a moment. "It's worse than the painter's, a thousand times. What's the outside of us, anyhow, to what goes on within? What's a man's face compared to his soul?"

"Perhaps you are unaware," said Miss Rayburn, with considerable amusement, "that you are flattering me tremendously. You forget that I have had too little experience to know much about people's souls."

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"You have made use of what you've had then. And I didn't intend to flatter you."

"That's the charming part of it!" They had reached her father's house, and she turned away from him, laughing, and ran up the steps. "Are you coming in?"

"No. I didn't know we were here."

He had turned towards her in a bewildered way, and now stood hat in hand, with his foot on the lowest step. She remained poised lightly with her hand on the bell. He did not move; he was looking dreamily down the broad sunny street.

"Well, am I to ring?"

She laughed a little nervously.

"Oh! Yes, of course. I must go."

He waved his straw hat to her, and she made him a prim curtesy. Then she rang the bell, and when the maid opened the door, went straight to her room.

Maud Rayburn's literary success had been a great surprise to her. It had all come with a rush, and now she was enjoying to the full her sense of being work-worthy. She was much *fêted* and flattered, but had not allowed herself to be unduly puffed up thereby. She knew that her work was good; that it had chanced to catch popular fancy was her happiness; that it filled her purse she had no need to care.

On coming into her room after her walk with Howard Russell, she wandered about rather aimlessly for a few minutes, flung her hat on a festooned bed in an alcove, glanced at a clock on the mantelpiece, and finally sat down before her dressing-table, propped her face on her hands and looked fixedly at herself in the glass.

It reflected a piquant little visage, topped by a knot of light-brown hair, eyes bright and dark, a chin firm and pointed, a mouth red and sensitively curved. Its owner addressed her reflection severely, with all that mental unreserve in which women feel it a luxury to indulge.

"What you need," she said to herself, "is more experience. You've had a good deal, you know, in scraps. But what you want and what you must have before you can do your best work, is the one—big—thing that will take you mentally off your feet and upset your equilibrium. And you don't want it wholly for the sake of your work, either."

She paused, and after a moment the reflection in the glass began to grow softly pink. She got up and began brushing her hair vigorously.

Howard Russell walked slowly down the street, his hands clasped behind him, while his eyes, trained in the habits of the naturalist, were fixed thoughtfully on the ground. What his reflections were it would not have been wholly easy to conjecture. As he walked on, hardly noticing where his steps were leading him, the narrow cleft between the eyebrows grew deeper and deeper, the curves of the lips became more and more rigid, even the chin seemed to grow firmer in its outline. The whole face became expressive of a settled purpose, but a purpose devoid of any hope of fulfilment.

"Pansies, sir?"

A ragged and dispirited-looking urchin held up a bunch of purple blossoms without much evident expectation of finding a purchaser in the abstract individual who was approaching. But some spell seemed to break at the sound of the boy's shrill voice. As Russell started and then came to a standstill in front of him, the *gamin's* keen eyes lighted up and a half-suppressed grin illumined his smutty countenance.

Russell took the flowers, dropped a coin into the boy's small paw, and walked on. Perhaps it was something in the pansies' cheerful little faces that brought a softer curve to the stern lips. He looked about him. Above, the smiling sky; all about, the glow of the summer sunshine; a flickering on the pavement, a mosaic of elm-branch shadows; down the street, a group of children at play; in the window of a house opposite, a baby leaping and crowing in its mother's arms.

"Till I know you better!"

His head and even his shoulders went back suddenly; still holding the pansies tenderly he walked down the street, all the vigour of young manhood in his sturdy, swinging step—all the hope of youth and strength and love in his eyes.

* * * * *

Miss Rayburn took Mr. Russell's card from the maid who brought it, and went downstairs immediately after the glance in the mirror which she would not have been a woman if she had been able to forego. She found her visitor in the cool library. He rose as she came in, and she saw that he had been turning the pages of a new magazine.

"What is that?" she asked, as he laid it down to take her hand.

"It's the *Mirror*," he replied. "Of course you know it has one of your stories in it?"

"No; I did not. It must be just out."

"I bought it as I came along. I haven't had time to read it; I was just cutting the leaves as you came down."

"It must be a story I sent them in April," she said indifferently, sinking into a low chair and opening a fan. "How warm it is. Doesn't it enervate one completely, this stifling atmosphere?"

He stared at her.

"Well, you are the coolest——"

"Indeed, I'm not," she interrupted flippantly.

"Don't you want to see this?" Russell's tone was cross; he really felt vexed at her indifference. "They've had Hobson do the pictures—three of 'em. You're actually sated with fame!"

She shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"Not till they put 'This number contains Miss Rayburn's story So-and-So,' on the cover." Then, leaning forward, "Show it me, please."

He took a chair nearer hers, and they turned the pages together.

"What exquisite pictures! Oh, dear, they've done better by it than it deserves!"

Suddenly she started, and then turned upon him eyes full of delightful surprise.

"Why, it's 'Finished!'" she exclaimed. "It must be that it just filled some gap or it couldn't have come out so soon as this. Do you know I wrote that story the evening after we had that last walk together? I sat up till two o'clock to finish it."

Russell turned the last page.

"Is it a love story?" he asked, apparently for no reason at all.

For no reason at all she blushed.

"You know I never write them," she said. "No, it's not a love story; it simply leads up to that."

"Leads up to it?"

"Why, yes. Here, read the end of it. The hero and heroine have been friends for a long time, and she's rich and he's poor. She thinks he loves her, and waits for him to speak, and he never does."

"Why?"

Russell looked steadily into her dark eyes as she leant forward, playing with her fan. His own were blue, but at this moment they looked black.

"The story does not say."

There was a note of haughtiness in her voice, and she looked away from him to pick up her handkerchief, which had slipped from her lap to the floor.

"Then why do you call it 'Finished'?"

His voice sounded unnatural even to himself.

"Because it was the end—for her."

She leant back in her chair and began flicking the edge of the fan against her palm.

"Then she loved him?"

"Well, as to that—she thought she did—but——"

She had clasped her arms behind her head and was looking straight at him from the little distance to which she had withdrawn. He leant towards her quickly, and as she dropped her hands to her lap he caught them in his.

"No—no, it was not the end!" he cried hoarsely. "Maud, let me teach you to finish the story!"

His voice was passionate and trembling; she watched him curiously for an instant and then drew away her hands.

"Mr. Russell, I am sorry!" she said.

He sprang to his feet and stood before her.

"Then it is true? You do not care for me?"

"No; not in the way you mean."

She saw his face change and darken, she saw his clenched hands and the veins upon the forehead. She watched the struggle with the keen look of the vivisectionist in her bright eyes. She did not know that she was cruel, for at that moment her womanhood had disappeared in the uncaring zeal of the artist. And in the bitterness of his pain he saw that look.

When he spoke again his voice had found a note that she had never before heard in it.

"At least," he said, "I have been the means of teaching you something in your cruel craft. You do not know me as you think you know me, but you do know that I can love; I have shown you that. Go on, now, and finish your story, for I have taught you, after all. The hero has declared himself!"

* * * * *

It was a warm August day, and the ocean was so dazzling that Howard Russell moved his chair round and sat facing the laundry arrangements in the little yard at the end of the verandah. The Sea View was not a first-class hotel, but Howard Russell was poor. He filled his pipe and settled himself to the enjoyment of a fresh, uncut magazine. As he slit the pages with his penknife, now and then stopping to read a bit, a name caught his eye. It was the title at the head of a story, and it was "Finished."

"Plagiarism, I call it," he muttered to himself.

It was not plagiarism, after all, for the name at the end was Maud Stillwell Rayburn, but the story was the story of a happy love. Russell read it slowly to the end. When he had done he let the magazine drop from his listless fingers to the floor.

"She understands now!" he thought wearily.

ELSIE FRANKS.

A RUNNING FIGHT.

He was at last on his way to take part in the ball to which he had looked forward so eagerly, but as the hansom carried him swiftly to his destination, his thoughts wandered away to another place, and a feeling of dread began to creep over him.

His mind went back several months to another scene in which there were three actors, and he was one. It was outside a theatre, the lights at the entrance falling on a carriage; a man stood at the door of the carriage saying good-bye to its two occupants. His words rang in Harry Gait's ears as though they were being uttered at that very moment.

"Good-bye, Nellie!" Oh, the tenderness of that adieu! "It seems a strange spot to say farewell for months, but"—he stopped, hesitating, almost bashful—"we said 'good-bye' this afternoon!" Another pause, during which his loving gaze remained fixed upon her pretty face; then Benton aroused himself and turned to the other occupant, his friend, Harry Gait. "Take care of her for me, old fellow! I intrust her to you while I am away, and I know that you will watch over her, for the sake of our life-long friendship! I know I can trust her to you!"

He held out his hand, then drew it back hastily to brush away a tear that had forced its way to his eye. The next instant, as if ashamed of the weakness he was unable to hide, he turned and strode away.

It all came back so vividly to Gait that it made him shut his teeth hard. The play was one that Nellie had wished to see, and Benton had promised to take her before he left to take up his appointment in the South of France, but the date of production had been altered, and thus it came to pass that their last evening was spent at the theatre in company with Gait, for Benton insisted

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on keeping his promise, and he had to catch the midnight train.

* * * * *

The cabman pulled the horse up with a jerk outside the brilliantly-lighted house, and Harry Gait returned to his immediate surroundings with a start. In a few minutes he was walking across the floor of the ball room towards the girl who had sat by his side in the carriage.

"I must apologise, Miss Carton! I am late—after all!" The last two words were not uttered.

"Did you think that my ball was like a bundle of old clothes, to be left aside till called for?" she asked lightly. Yet there was a trace of disappointment in her voice that struck him, although she herself was unconscious of it.

"I fear that I delayed in my coming," he began, remembering how he had hesitated outside after dismissing the cab. "I was—asked to give advice. I may have this waltz? I see it is not taken." He scribbled his initials against the number.

"How interesting!" She tried to hide the happy light in her bewitching eyes as he passed his arms about her, and they whirled along the floor to the strains of a dreamy waltz. "Advice about what?"

"I had to advise a man against running into danger." His voice was grave.

"How solemn!" she exclaimed. She was curious and pressed the subject. "Danger of what?"

"Of colliding with another couple!" returned Harry more gaily, as he dexterously avoided a collision. "I shall spoil your reputation as a dancer to-night, if I am not careful."

Nellie Carton laughed, and remained silent during the rest of the waltz; but she did not forget. As Gait drew her into a recess with an open window, through which the fragrance of late spring was wafted by the gentle night breeze, she returned to the subject.

"What danger?" But curiosity had given place to wistfulness; she began to understand vaguely. She looked into his eyes and was constrained to turn towards the window.

"What danger?" she asked again.

"The danger of being a—thief, and causing great loss to a friend who trusts him implicitly!"

She glanced at him with a half-mystified, half-comprehending look—the look of one who is afraid to understand.

"The loss of——" She stopped abruptly; then added suddenly: "The loss of property, of course, since you speak of a thief?" She felt relieved that her first suspicion was incorrect.

"No!" was the blunt reply, cruel to both in its brevity. "The loss of the girl he loves! I had to warn and reason with the—thief!"

She started, and grew pale as she made a gesture of protest.

"What cruel words you use!" she exclaimed passionately. "And the girl—I suppose you would call her a traitor?"

"I ought, if she did not advise the thief to run from the danger."

"Run?" she queried anxiously. "Ah! Is that what you advised him to do?"

"The thief?" The words came fiercely from his lips and she shuddered. "Yes; I told him to run and fight the temptation to betray a trust."

"But perhaps it is all a mistake; I mean, perhaps the original possession was all a mistake. Or perhaps——" A half-sob cut short her almost incoherent utterance.

His heart beat violently as he gazed ardently at her averted face; he wanted to see the look in her eyes, to learn whether she advised the would-be thief to run from danger.

"Oh!" she murmured—almost moaned. "If all three could run!"

She moved her head, so that their eyes met again. A great impulse came over him to catch her in his arms and press her to his breast, and for an instant it seemed as if she would lift her arms to be taken; but at that moment there came to them the awakening music of a song, set to waltz time, that brought to both the vision of a man hundreds of miles distant, a man who was working cheerfully and looking forward to the time when he could claim the girl he had been compelled to leave and whom he had intrusted to his friend's care. It was a favourite song of Benton's, and the girl's eyes filled with tears. She had sung it for him many times.

"It is not cowardly to run, sometimes!" she said softly. "It gives time to think, to find out whither one is drifting. I wonder whether any early roses are blooming in the warm south?"

All the passion died away within him, and he exerted a mighty effort in order to speak calmly.

"I shall soon see. I am going there."

"You are going there; to see—Willie?" Her face paled; he noticed it in the dim light; it had been crimson a few seconds before.

"Nellie, he asked me to take care of you for him, and I was—— I mean I am afraid that this night air may give you cold. Let me take you to another seat before I say good-night. You have lost a dance or two."

"You have lost them also," she remarked, trying to keep her voice steady, as they walked into the light, unconscious of the significant glances shot at them.

"I have lost more than the dances, but I have saved something. Will you have this seat?"

"I will tell Willie how good you have been," said Nellie confusedly. "I am——"

"*I* will tell him how good I have been, if need be!"

He took the rose with which she was toying, and pressed it to his lips. And then she found herself alone.

* * * * *

It was during the afternoon of the second day after the ball that Harry Gait received the heartiest of welcomes from Willie Benton in the pretty house which he was occupying.

"I am really glad to see you, old fellow!" cried Benton rapturously. "It's very good of you to come down here to have a look at me. Now, what do you think of the house? Not large, of course, but I think it will be big enough for us two, don't you? Nellie and I, of course," he added, as if he feared that Harry might not understand aright. "I don't think she will mind giving up a little till I get promoted, I promised to marry her in a year, you know, and the time is running short, and I haven't got on so well as I expected. But I am tiring you! Sit down and—tell me the news."

Harry Gait sat down in a comfortable wicker-chair and smiled at his friend's pleasure at receiving a visit.

"I shall want you to tell me whether you think I have hit her taste in furnishing, old fellow. You know her taste, and you are a better judge than I. Er—how is she?" He fidgeted nervously with the flap of his coat-pocket.

"I left her quite well," returned Gait, and it was fortunate that Benton did not notice the forced lightness of tone. "But tell me of yourself. Is the house-furnishing complete?"

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Benton flushed: he fancied that Gait had already observed the paucity of furniture.

"Y-e-s. We can add as we go on, you see. The hangings are pink; that was her favourite colour, wasn't it? I have tried to get things that will be in accordance with her liking. That chair is for her; it's comfortable, isn't it? Yes? That's good!" With a sigh of relief. "The view out through that window is a pretty one, but it's getting dark now. This is to be her part of the house. Really, my dear Harry, I must apologise for not having a cigar to offer you, but the fact is, I didn't expect you, and I've—er—given up smoking for the present."

"Don't mention it! I neglected to fill my own case, but I can do without a smoke for one evening. But what has made you give up the weed?"

Benton flushed crimson.

"I'll be honest with you, old fellow. I am saving all I can so as to get a comfortable home for her. I suppose you saw that my clothes were shabby, but I am making the most of everything," blurted out Benton. "I have wondered lately whether I ought to ask her to come here," he continued, rather sadly. "And I have thought other things. Harry, I am glad you are here, for I have something to tell you."

"And I have something to tell you, Will! But let me hear your thoughts first."

"Wait a second; I must send a message." Benton went out of the room, but speedily returned and seated himself opposite his friend.

The light, which was fading, fell on Benton's face, but Gait remained discreetly in the shadow.

In the meantime Gait was running over the three arguments that he had been revolving in his mind ever since the ball. Perhaps it was all a mistake from the beginning! Nellie's words haunted him. Nellie could love him and give up Benton if he pressed his suit; and if Benton agreed, then there would be no question of either thief or traitor. He had not told her the real reason of his sudden determination to go south to see Benton.

On the other hand, if he passed out of her life, she would be happy with Will. It was just a case of drifting into love, and if the drifting were stopped, then—well, he believed that she would not suffer; it had not gone far enough for that with her. And with himself? So he had come to Benton to put it plainly before him.

Benton's devotion to Nellie was so apparent that it had chilled the warm hopes of Gait. Now, what was he going to say?

"I have been rather discouraged down here," began Benton nervously. "I expected a better income, as I am partly paid on the yield of the mine, but the yield has disappointed me up till now. So I have been wondering whether Nellie will care to come here. Then, you see, your letters—hers and yours—have sent me off on the wrong track; when a man is disheartened, he is ready to see trouble everywhere. You two are such congenial people—you suit each other so well—and you, old fellow, can give her far more pleasure and comfort than I can."

Gait drew a deep breath; silently, not to attract the attention of Benton, who was staring vacantly through the window. Those were his own arguments, uttered by the man he wished to oust. But there was a greater argument yet; would it also come?

A knock at the door, which Benton answered. He returned to his seat, holding out a small packet of cigars.

"I could not bear to look so cheap as to make you go without a cigar, Harry, so I sent for some," he said apologetically. "Light up!"

A pang of remorse shot through Gait; his friend's inherent goodness was so evident.

"There is another thing," resumed Benton, taking his seat once more and speaking in a low tone. "When two people are thrown together and their tastes are so much alike, there is always the chance of—their drifting—into love. And that was what, in my discouraged condition, here by myself, I thought might happen!"

Gait drew another deep breath and waited. Strange that Benton should have followed the same line of thought! And at what conclusion had Benton arrived? Gait dared not trust himself to speak.

"But as soon as I saw you here," continued Benton more lightly, "I knew that I was wrong!" Gait's cigar dropped from his fingers, but he quickly picked it up. "I was wrong to suppose it of you, Harry," he added contritely. "I know how true a friend you are! And I have the greatest confidence in Nellie!" (proudly). "She often heard of you from me before she saw you, and she openly expresses her admiration of you in her letters!"

"And have you written those ideas of yours to her in any of your letters?" inquired Gait.

"Not a word!" cried Benton hastily. "She would have thought me a jealous idiot and ungenerous to her and you. I ought to know that she would not swerve from me, and that a man of your character does not forget himself so far as to drift into love with the girl who is affianced to his friend. I was an idiot! But I tell you, Harry, that I would have said 'Heaven bless you both,' even if my silly suspicions had proved true, and you had come here to tell me so! Still, I admit that it is easier to say the words when I am not required to say them!" And Benton laughed happily.

The night was gathering; the moon shed its feeble light into the room so that Gait could discern the joy on his friend's countenance, and he was glad that he was in the shade and Will Benton could not see how pale and haggard his face had become. He knew it was pale and haggard; he felt that it was, for it was so cold and the muscles so strained.

"But you said that you had something to tell me," said Benton, after a pause. "What is it?"

"I have brought this rose from her," responded Gait unsteadily, taking the flower with its wrapping of wadding from his breast pocket and handing it to Benton, who reverently raised it to his lips. "I think she will come here as soon as you want her, Will; and I would ask her soon, for I am going abroad and shall not be able to look after her for you. That is what I wanted to tell you."

"Abroad!" echoed Benton. "Rather sudden, isn't it?"

"Yes," came the reply, slowly and thoughtfully. "I feel bound to go."

"Well, old fellow, I'm sorry—pressing business, I suppose? But I'm glad you came to see me and make me happy before running away."

Running away! Gait started as if stung, but quickly recovered himself.

"Yes, I'm running away." Under his breath he murmured: "One does not often save one's reputation by running away; but in my case it is my only chance!"

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Geo. Day.

"LOVINGLY, CAROLYN."

CAROLYN was writing letters. It was her day for correspondence.

Being possessed just now of a fad for the orderly and systematic arrangement of all her actions, she made it a point to map out beforehand her duties and diversions for each ensuing week. Consequently she had "days" for things.

Carolyn's personality scarcely suggested a temperament much given to prim or rigid performance of obligations.

Wide hazel eyes and a dimple in the chin do not particularly denote an unduly precise or grimly methodical nature.

Carolyn had shut herself in her room, giving orders that she was not to be disturbed. Quite a little pile of letters confronted her. Letters from cousins, aunts, girl friends, and—others. Carolyn paused as she took from the pile a certain one of those—others. It was addressed in an erratic masculine hand. A pair of pretty brows puckered over the hazel eyes and the lips pouted distinctly as Carolyn read the letter for—well, not for the first time since its arrival.

The pile was diminishing in a most satisfactory manner. Carolyn had almost reached the last—that dreaded last one which would require such concentrated effort in answering—when there came a sound of light, hurried footsteps, and an imperative rap on the door.

"Let me in, you sinner!" It was Rilla Chadbourne's voice.

"Oh, it's you, Rilla!" The key turned in the lock.

"Now, I'd just like to know," demanded Rilla, throwing herself at once into her favourite chair, "what all this is about? Days for correspondence, indeed! Can't be disturbed! Well, you've got to be disturbed, so there. You've got to go to lunch with me and shopping afterwards. I've arranged it all in my own mind and I won't take 'No' for an answer."

"Gracious, Rilla, your unexpectedness is something terrible. Why didn't you let me know?"

"Because I couldn't, that's all. So get ready——"

"But I must write one more letter."

"Who to?" questioned Rilla, ungrammatically, conscious of privileged rights as Carolyn's chum.

"Why—it's to my professor."

"Carolyn, you little terror, are you encouraging that man? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? No wonder you blush. I'll tell you now you can't do any trifling with Prof. Lewis MacDowell. He's dreadfully in earnest. He thinks you mean everything you say, or look or write!"

"I haven't looked a thing or said a thing! I've treated him abominably," protested Carolyn.

"Then this letter can wait."

"Oh, no, I must write it now; I should have written yesterday, you see."

"Then hurry!" commented Rilla.

Carolyn sat down and hurried accordingly, Rilla talking at intervals. The letter, with its accompanying interruptions are as follows:

"My dear Friend.—Your most delightful letter was received and I (oh, please don't, Rilla, I must get this just right—you know he's a professor) trust you will permit me to express my appreciation of your most interesting and able remarks. (Wait just a minute, Rilla). I sometimes wish I possessed a deeper and (Oh! Rilla, I'm stuck! It's so hard to answer such scholarly letters. No—don't say a word—I've got it!) keener insight into the beautiful philosophy of which you write so (let me see) earnestly and wisely. People call me superficial, but indeed, sometimes I have thoughts which (I am hurrying! Please don't talk) I am sure are below the surface of things. You somehow help me to think truer and deeper. (Rilla, will you stop?) Yes, you may come on Wednesday evening. I shall look forward to seeing you. (Yes, I'm ready, Rilla—just a minute)——"

Rilla clapped her hands authoritatively. "Enough, enough. Now sign your name. No—you shan't read it over—it's all right. Seal that letter up at once, do you hear? There! now, do hurry and dress."

As Carolyn fluttered about the room, donning her outdoor things, she fretted not a little over the letter.

"Oh, dear, I ought to have read it, Rilla. He's so correct, and if there should be mistakes——"

"Nonsense! If you don't stop that worrying habit, you'll be old before your time. Come on now, are you ready?"

The next day a huge box of lovely roses came for Miss Carolyn Winterburn. Her eyes danced.

"Oh, what dreams they are! I suppose dear old Phil sent them, he's such a——"

But the name on the card was that of Lewis MacDowell.

Carolyn gasped. "Such an unheard of thing for him to do! He's—progressing."

On Wednesday evening he appeared promptly at eight. The roses had disconcerted Carolyn and she was conscious of distinct embarrassment when she went forward to greet him.

"It was so—so good of you," he murmured. His voice was actually husky. "I've been treasuring it ever since."

"Treasuring what?" stammered Carolyn.

"That—that letter."

"Oh, you liked it, then?"

"Liked it! How can you doubt it? I've been in Heaven ever since." This certainly sounded amazingly unlike the customary formal observations of Prof. Lewis MacDowell.

"I'm sure I don't—don't understand you in the least!"

"Then you—you didn't mean it?"

"Mean what? What did I say?"

"There!" he cried, and pointed to the closing lines. "Didn't you mean that?"

She looked and read:

"You somehow help me to think truer and deeper. Yes, you may come on Wednesday evening. I shall look forward to seeing you. Lovingly, CAROLYN."

The girl's cheeks were crimson. "Oh, it's all a mistake! How could you think I would! Rilla was in the room—I was in a hurry—and—oh, I didn't mean it, I assure you! It's all a dreadful mistake!"

"All a mistake? Then I—I was wrong! And there isn't any—any hope for me, after all!"

Carolyn laughed softly. A bewildering light flashed in the hazel eyes.

"Men are so stupid!" she murmured. "I didn't say that, did I?"

ARTHUR AGNEW.

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HER PROFESSION.

"You don't seem a bit glad to see me, and I thought that you'd meet me with open arms." Miss Alice Martin—Gladys Forbes it was on the bill-boards—made up a most delectable pout as she shook hands with Austin on the station platform. Austin tried to summon up a light smile, and ended by glaring fiercely at the trunks and scenery, and other trappings and appurtenances of *The Lost Girl* company that were dumped from the luggage van.

"I am glad to see you, very glad, but the sight of all that makes me hot," and he waved his hand comprehensively to include not only the unoffending luggage, but the rest of the company grouped about the perspiring and voluble manager.

"All that! Do you know, sir, that you are insulting my bread and butter? Do you realise that as the leading lady of the only company possessing the exclusive dramatic rights to that great drama, *The Lost Girl*, I am entitled to some consideration, professional if not personal?" and she swept him a mocking courtesy. The man recognised the bit of oratory with a very brief smile.

"Come, my cousin, do not bend your brows so fiercely upon me. You were not wont to treat me so in the old days. Time was when you were merry as a summer's day, and danced down the hours as lightly as the aspen leaf fluttering in the sunlight. But now your face is dark and stern and your look holds a brooding menace. Do you think it right to treat your long-lost cousin so?" And she made a gay pretence of begging for mercy, while her eyes danced with laughter.

"For Heaven's sake, Alice——"

"'For my sake' would be more like the gay cavalier I used to know," interrupted his tormentor.

"Drop that blank verse style of speech, Alice. You sound like a historical novel. Forget the stage for a few minutes, if you can, and listen to me."

"Another lecture," the girl heaved a deep sigh of sham resignation. "You might, at least, be taking me in the direction of my hotel. I've no call to be wasting all my time."

"Alice, you impudent little wretch, I'd like to shake you."

"You can't, at least, not till you get me to my hotel. I don't know my way about your town, so you're free to insult me to your heart's content for the next quarter of an hour. Then I may get the manager to thrash you for me."

"I beg your pardon, little girl. I didn't mean to hurt you, but I suppose it did sound rude. But, Alice, I want only your own good."

"Oh, yes," she cried out, impatiently. "My own good! How many times have I heard that in my life! My nurse used to say it when she gave me rhubarb and castor oil. My governess said it when she set me long French exercises to write because I preferred the open air and the sunshine to the stuffy schoolroom and the stupid books. Why, when papa died, and my heart was nearly broken, the minister told me that my sorrow was all for the chastening of my spirit. And now you tell me that you insult me and my profession in order that you may prove to me how ardently you desire my highest happiness."

There was no mistaking the indignation that shone in the blue eyes. Every feature of her and every line of her figure were eloquent of injured womanhood and dignity.

"No, no! You misunderstand me. I protest I meant no slight to you or to your profession. Knowing you, I should be the last man in the world to speak a word or think a thought that was not full of respect and honour for you. And your profession is a good one, too—a noble one, sometimes; but for you—Alice, don't you see what I mean? Can't you understand how it cuts me to see you buffeted about the country from town to town in the company of people who are not fit to look at you in the street, much less to travel in the same 'bus with you. And then to think of you night after night exhibiting your talents to a houseful of grinning and applauding idiots."

"Do you mean that they are idiots to applaud me?" Her tone was calm but dangerous.

"Saints forbid! They'd be raving lunatics and paralytics to boot if they didn't. But I don't like the thought of the whole business. You were made for things so infinitely better—finer."

"Yes, starving, for instance. How would you like the thought of that? Consider it for a moment. A lonely garret, a pallet of straw in the corner on which lies a pallid, emaciated girl, bearing faint traces of her early freshness and beauty, the cold moon peeping in at the window—I wonder why the moon is always cold when it peeps through garret windows—a fireless grate—fancy a grate in a garret—and so on, and so on, and so on."

"Come, Alice, be serious. I may not see you again for a long time."

"Therefore you must be as rude as possible in the shortest space of time. Are editors always rude? Is it a habit they acquire from their playful bouts with the esteemed contemporary in the next street, or the next county, or the next somewhere else?"

"But to think of you having to earn your living."

"Don't think of it, then, if it causes you so much pain," this very sharply. "I'm sure I never asked you to. You are not only insulting, but unjust as well, and very silly. Why shouldn't I earn my own living? Am I any less, or more, than human? I must live, and, therefore, I must work. Papa left me nothing but his blessing and the memory of the happiest, most care-free girlhood that ever was lived in this dull old world. When I found that I must work I took stock of my few poor talents. I might have taken in washing, or gone out as a charwoman, but the thought of my poor hands red and swollen filled me with dismay. How would you like to see me with my hands in a wash-tub?"

Austin was calmer and more nearly master of himself than before. "Depend on whose tub it was."

Miss Alice scented danger and diverted the attack. "A friend of papa's knew Mr Crufts, the manager, and got me a little part—such a little part. I had to dust the parlour furniture and say 'Yes'm' and 'No'm' and then courtesy in a way that threatened to dislocate my spinal column and run out. But I persevered and I studied and I got a better part. It was dreadfully hard work. I cried myself to sleep more times than I shall ever confess, but work conquers all things, or something of that sort, and here I am. Not rich, not even successful, but making enough to buy my gowns and now and then a hat."

"But, Alice, don't you ever get tired of it? Don't you want—it's an awfully hard life for a girl knocking about the country."

"Get tired of it. Of course I do, being human. Don't you get tired of writing editorials sometimes?"

"Oh, yes. Lots of other people get tired of them, too."

"I think there are times when all of us, even the best, hate the very sight of the goose that lays the golden eggs for us. But this is my profession. I'm beginning to know it and I'm proud of it—yes, proud of it. Why shouldn't I be? And will you please tell me what else I am to do? Will you give me a place on your newspaper? Will you teach me to write editorials? Or, perhaps, you would like me to draw the fashion plates. I'm sure it wouldn't matter how I drew them, for no woman ever looked or dressed like those creatures, even on the stage."

They were very near the hotel, and Austin felt that he must have appeared anything but impressive to this tantalising bit of femininity at his side. He spoke quickly lest she should escape him before he had said what was in his heart. "There is a place I have to offer you, Alice, but it isn't in my office. It's in my home. You must know, surely you know how I feel."

The girl stopped and drew back from him a step. "So-o! That is why you have spoken so disparagingly of my work. You thought to make it seem small in my eyes; to show me how little it was worth to myself or to anyone else." Austin lifted his hand appealingly and stepped forward. She drew back a pace.

"No. Don't speak to me. Don't look at me." She laughed in a quick, angry fashion. "How you must have been praising yourself as we came along for your adroitness and, above all, for your charity and your sublime self-sacrifice. Well, you have failed. I love my work and I shall keep at it in spite of your thoughtful pity. If I ever marry any man, Mr. James Austin, it will be because he comes to me in some other guise than as a home for incompetent and discouraged actresses."

She ran up the hotel steps leaving him dismayed, and almost cowed by her contempt and bitter scorn. When he recovered his power of speech he reviled the stage in all the terms of objurgation at his command and went back to his office.

The audience at the theatre that night included all the town who were not bankrupt or bedridden, but it did not contain Mr. James Austin. That gentleman sat gloomily at his desk pretending to work.

The play was in the full swing of the third act. The villain had been repulsed by the heroine and was preparing to carry her away to his mountain fastness. There are no mountain fastnesses in England really, but the exigencies of the legitimate drama demand them for the third act, and the exigencies must have their way.

Miss Martin stood in the wings near the stage-door, waiting for her cue to go on. It was a warm night in early autumn, and the door was wide open. A knot of stage-hands stood about, some within and some without the door. The sound of hurrying feet outside caught her ear, and she turned her head as a boy came running up the street and stopped at the door.

"What's up, boy?" a man inquired casually. "You seem to be in a hurry."

"Mr. Austin's been shot!" The girl inside started forward with a low cry that no one in the startled group heard.

"Austin shot!" "When?" "Who did it?"

"Don't know. Nobody knows. He was settin' at his desk 'n' somebody shot 'im through the window 'n' he fell over dead, quick as that!"

The boy described the editor's fall in a realistic pantomime.

Alice felt the solid earth reel beneath her feet. Her eyes were wide and staring, and her heart was clutched in a cold grasp. Jim dead! Her cousin whom she had known ever since she had known anything. The boy who had carried her books and brought her birds' eggs, and bright pebbles from the beach, and all the other tokens of a boy's affection. Jim! The man who had been her hero when he had thrown up his position on a great newspaper, because he held his own convictions higher than his salary, and had buried himself in this sleepy country town where he at least had freedom to speak out what he thought without the fear of offending some rich advertiser choking the words in his throat.

Jim! Who had offered her that night the love of a heart that had always hungered for her.

And then at last she knew what had before been only a vague, unspoken possibility, a shadowy dream of the future—that it was Jim she had loved, more than her pride, more than her profession, more than her life. It was strange that in the midst of the pain and the grief that shut her in, the realisation that she knew her own heart was very sweet to her.

A touch on her shoulder aroused her. It was the manager.

"What is the matter? Why don't you go on? Hughes has given you your cue three times and the house will begin to think there's something wrong."

Yes, she must go on. Jim was dead and her heart

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was broken, but she must play her part. The stage is not so different from real life, after all. The audience never knew that night that every fibre in the body of the actress, whose grace and charm they applauded vociferously, throbbed with keenest pain for the cousin and lover lying dead. She said her lines, how she never knew. The stage was a dim blur in her eyes and the audience was far beyond the range of her consciousness.

The curtain fell and she found herself in the tiny corner partitioned off for the star's dressing-room. As she changed her costume for the street gown her mind was made up. She would see Jim that night, at once. His dead body, at least, should have the comfort of the presence that had been denied him living.

But where had they taken him? Some one could tell her at the office, surely. A stage-hand told her the way with a curious look on his face, and she hurried through the quiet streets. Her mind was keenly alive now to her loss. Jim was dead. Jim, who had always stood to her for everything alive and human, pulsing with energy and ambition. The man who that afternoon had offered her the love of a warm, thrilling heart, was a cold, senseless lump of clay.

The windows of the newspaper office were bright and through them came the thump and whirl of presses. Unfeeling wretches to be so busy and unconcerned when the master mind of them all was still. She pushed open the first door and stood before the cashier's desk.

"Where have they taken him—Mr. Austin?"

The cashier stared. "They haven't taken him anywhere, miss. He's upstairs in his office where he always is at night."

"Where he always is!" Was their business of life then so urgent that it could not stand still for one short hour while they paid a small tribute of care and attention to him? She climbed the stairs with trembling limbs and a heart that seemed as cold and dead in her bosom as his that the murderer's bullet had stilled forever.

The door at the top marked "Managing Editor" stood partly open, and from within came the sound of loud voices and then a laugh. For a moment her grief was overmastered by her indignation. Was it—he—in there? She, at least, could sorrow for him.

She pushed the door back and stood on the threshold, and saw—Jim, alive and sound as ever, sitting at his desk and listening carelessly to a grimy, tousled man, whose face and hands bore evidences of much contact with ink and glue. The blood rushed to her heart and the lights danced around her in a mad, bacchanalian whirl. She put out her hand to find support, and then Jim saw her.

"Why, Alice! What is it? Why are you here?" The grimy man looked and grinned. Jim hurried forward and grasped her hands. At the sound of his voice and the touch of his hands the warm blood coursed through all her veins again, and she gasped at the heat that filled her.

"Oh, Jim!" And she clutched his hands tighter. "I thought—they said—you were dead; that some one had shot you."

He laughed a great laugh of comprehension. "So you heard that, did you? Why, little girl, he never touched me. Some crazy fool did take a shot at me through the window, but it was just by way of an emphatic reply to one of my editorials. All the harm he did was to smash a pane of glass and punch a hole in the ceiling. He's cooling his heels in the lock-up now."

She sat down suddenly in the chair at her elbow. Human nerves are like engines—apt to run wild when the load is suddenly taken off. Her heart was beating like a steam-hammer and her brain was in a whirl.

"What must you think of me? I was so frightened, and I expected to find—to find you——" she broke off with a shudder and shut her eyes.

"You expected to find a mangled corpse, and instead you find me alive and disgustingly healthy. Are you disappointed?"

"Don't Jim, please. I can't bear to hear—to joke—about it—to think about it. It was too horrible. I thought I should die." He looked at her curiously, a new light dawning in his eyes.

"Are you sure it was only cousinly affection that brought you here?" He awaited her answer breathlessly. The grimy man had retired, like the sensible individual that he was, and the office was empty of all save those two. The girl studied the floor and the tips of her shoes long and carefully. Then she lifted her eyes slowly to his face.

"I never said it was, Jim, dear."

"And how about your profession, sweetheart?" he inquired, after a well-spent interval.

"My profession is here, with you—wherever you are. I didn't know it this afternoon, but to-night taught me what I might have known all my life—what an empty, hopeless thing life would be without you. I'm only a woman, after all, Jim."

Albert Britt.

Refreshing Candour.

Guest: "Isn't my dinner ready yet?" New Waiter: "Oh, certainly; it was ready yesterday. It is just being warmed up a little."

Not Her Own Foot.

Lady (on leaving crowded carriage): "Well, I'm glad to get out of the crowd. I've had to stand on one foot all the way." Voice from the Corner: "Yes, and that foot was mine."

Sisters.

Livingston: "I didn't know that you and Miss Featherspray were so well acquainted." Nina: "Oh, yes; we are distantly related." Livingston: "How?" Nina: "We have both promised to be sisters to the same young man."

About Kissing.

He: "My dear cousin, I assure you I would never dare rob those sweet lips of a kiss." She: "Oh, you hypocrite! Didn't you make an attempt of that character the other day?" He: "Never. Far from having any intention of robbing you of a kiss, I was trying to give you one."

Why the Goods were Broken.

Pat Malony was nailing a box which he intended sending by rail. It was essential that the box should not be inverted during the passage, and a friend ventured to suggest to Pat to write conspicuously on the case: "This side up, with care." A few days afterwards, seeing Pat, he asked: "Heard any more about your goods? Did they get there safely?" "Every one of them broke," said Pat. "The whole lot? Did you label it 'this side up,' as I told you?" "Yes, I did. And for fear they shouldn't see it on the top, I put it on the bottom, too."

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COMMONPLACE JACK.

"If Jack wasn't so hopelessly commonplace!" sighed Mary Partridge, as she leant over the garden gate and watched her husband's clumsy figure move heavily down the village street. "And it does seem as though he grew more ugly and awkward every day of life," muttered she.

A step on the gravel walk aroused her from her discontented musing, and turning, she met the smiling face and handsome dark eyes of the young man who lodged next door.

"Don't look so disconsolate, Mrs. Partridge," said he gaily, disclosing his white teeth in a mocking smile. "Jack is coming home to dinner, isn't he?"

"Of course, Mr. Blake," answered Mary, the colour deepening in her face as she moved back a step.

"I—I was only thinking a bit," continued Mary, forcing a smile.

"Come, Mary, tell me all about it," said he softly. "Is marriage a failure, or is it not?"

Mary gave a slight toss of her head, and, without a word, turned and walked swiftly towards the house.

A complacent smile curved the young man's lips as he proceeded on his way.

"That girl is about as much in love with her middle-aged husband as I am," muttered he.

Indeed, that was the whole truth of the matter. Mary Partridge was not in love with her husband and never had been. Like many another village maiden, she had grown weary with the struggle for self-maintenance and had accepted her first good offer of marriage. Jack Partridge was a bachelor of forty, plain-looking, steady and industrious, earning the good wages of a mechanic, and the owner of a pretty cottage house.

To Mary this seemed almost wealth, and, smothering her desire for a more romantic attachment, she had gladly accepted the good fortune that had come to her. A year had passed, and with it the novelty of her comfortable surroundings, and a feeling of discontent had crept into Mary's heart.

Jack's quiet good-nature, his simple, unpretending manners and homely domestic ways had begun to pall upon her.

Her face burnt and her heart beat uncomfortably as she hastened into the house with Arthur Blake's words ringing in her ears.

"Is marriage a failure, Mary, or is it not?"

Over and over again Mary asked herself this question as she busied herself about the sunny kitchen, dusted her pretty parlour, and arranged the china and silver upon the snowy cloth of the dinner table.

Suddenly the answer came with swift conviction, and Mary clasped her hands together in mute despair. It was a failure—a miserable failure, she thought bitterly.

To give up forever her freedom, her liberty of action, her every chance in life, for what? Mary's eyes glanced round the room and answered for her. Yes, she had a pretty home, and Jim was kind to her and loved her more than she deserved, and yet—ah! her life was simply unbearable.

With this thought came an uncontrollable desire to escape from the bonds that held her, to snap the chains that she herself had wrought, and to go away, somewhere, anywhere, only to go—go!

As if driven by some invisible power, Mary snatched a hat from its nail and rushed from the house.

Across the well-kept grass-plot at the rear of the cottage Mary sped, out through the gate, and over the wide meadow that lay between the lawn and the dusty highway.

The sun shone, the birds sang, the grass was strewn with buttercups and daisies, and the air was fragrant with summer's sweetest perfume, but Mary heeded them not. Breathless and panting, she reached the long stretch of country road just as the village clock struck twelve. Jack would be coming home to dinner, and sometimes he came that way, thought Mary, and again that feeling that she must flee from him, from the pretty home, the hateful marriage bonds, urged her footsteps. The gleaming railway track lay across the road a short distance ahead.

The throbbing of her brain, the beating of her heart, deafened her ears to the approaching train, and swiftly she crossed the track. As she gained the other side she saw Jack's familiar figure coming towards her. Again, that curious desire to fly from him took possession of her and she hastily turned back.

"Mary! What are you about?" cried a man's voice, and two strong arms pushed her from the track, and she fell forward upon her face in the dust, while the train thundered on.

Stunned for a few moments, Mary did not move; then, with an effort, she rose to her feet, wondering at the strange silence about her.

Where was Jack? Her dazed eyes glanced up and down and fell at last upon a silent form that lay huddled against the track.

"Oh, Jack, have I killed you?" she cried in agony, as she bent over him.

Gathering his head and shoulders within her strong young arms, Mary dragged him into the cool grass beneath the shade of a huge tree.

Save for the slow rise and fall of that broad chest, Jack Partridge lay as one dead, and Mary's repentant tears and the touch of her trembling fingers fell unheeded upon that pale face.

It was but a few minutes, but it seemed hours to Mary in her suspense and remorse, before help arrived and her husband was carried slowly and carefully back to his cottage home.

Through the long night hours, while two physicians were working over Jack's poor, bruised body, there awoke in the heart of Mary Partridge a revelation. With horror and disgust she looked back upon her wild impulse of the morning.

"If Jack dies, he will have given his life for mine," she murmured through her sobs, "and no man can do more than that. What am I that I should scorn such a love, or call it commonplace?"

"Your husband will live. He has asked to see you," said the physician's voice.

"A pretty close shave, wasn't it?" whispered Jack, as his wife leant tenderly over him. "But whatever possessed you to come to meet me this morning, Mary?"

"I cannot tell, Jack dear," answered Mary, as she bent and kissed him.

N. Y. W.

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NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

Football Clubs and Players.

1st Prize: £25.
2nd Prize: £10.
5 Prizes of £1 each.

Special Prize for Ladies. *A six-guinea costume, which the winner may have made anywhere and send the bill to us.*

In the event of ladies winning the first cash prize, the Special Prize will go to the lady next most nearly correct. Should gentlemen win the first cash prize, the Special Prize will go to the lady most nearly correct. In the event of a tie it will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

On the opposite column will be found thirty sets of words, each set describing the name of either a football club or a football player.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those clubs and players you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. Where initials are indicated they must be put down. If omitted, the solution will be wrong.
4. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and get the number of *Pearson's Weekly* published on Friday, February 21st, and fill up the coupon which it contains.
5. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
6. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
7. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

The prizes are all offered by *Pearson's Weekly*.

All the names depicted will be found in "Football Who's Who," which contains the biographies of nearly a thousand players, and can be obtained for 1s. 3d., post free, from the publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Cut to edge—>

Example:

	Hired lodgings	Chambers.
1.	Fastidious	1
2.	Stall at a fair	2
3.	Maker of bread	3
4.	Go on performing	4
5.	J. W. and her son	5
6.	A British nobleman	6
7.	Exclude a small heap	7
8.	A bellowing noise	8
9.	Mourns over	9
10.	Dart off on ramblers	10
11.	Chief man	11
12.	See, a Moorish dance	12
13.	Man who makes gloves	13
14.	Mouth of river; grain	14
15.	To soak in lye	15
16.	Arab coasting vessel	16
17.	Chattering bird	17
18.	Steersman ramblers	18
19.	Catch by a hook	19
20.	Unfruitful	20
21.	Skin of animal dressed	21
22.	E. G.	22
23.	Makes sour	23
24.	Haughty pedal extremity	24
25.	One who tends the sick	25
26.	Cast a side glance	26
27.	Supreme control	27
28.	Indian state reception	28
29.	A pole cat	29
30.	Oblong solids of baked clay; 20 cwt.	30

Name .....

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.....

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Get *Pearson's Weekly* dated February 28th. On Sale next Friday.
Another coupon appears in it.

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A MATTER OF MILLIONS.

Being the very last recorded incident in the Career of Siever Crafte, of Chicago, Millionaire: from Notes made at the time by Captain Edward Harvey, British Vice-Consul at the Port of Manila, and since communicated by him to Ralph Enderby.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT SHIP IS THAT?"

"No; there's no one aboard."

"But surely there is some responsible person in charge! Besides, my business is important."

"Can't help it, Mister; cap'n's ashore, and so's the Chief.' Second-mate ain't appointed yet; and——"

"Mr. Blaine, the owner, that's who I want to see. I heard he was here less than ten minutes ago."

"Well, he ain't here now!—and p'raps the chap as told you so much 'll tell you more! I'm in charge and—no—I don't know nothing."

Bruce Doyle bit his lip with vexation, though he felt instinctively that the other was lying.

Hailing from Scotland Yard, where suspicion is as "the nostril's breath," and having, too, a more than shrewd idea that somewhere within the limits of the *Loch Katrine* the master-spirit lurked, for purposes of his own, not altogether easy of explanation, he was disinclined to accept defeat on the first repulse, and on the very threshold of inquiry.

The cautious sailorman—half-bos'un, half-ship's-carpenter—a marine all-round man—watched his unwelcome visitor's evident hesitation from the screwed-up corners of his cunning little eyes, but said nothing to help him to a decision.

"Well," said Doyle at last, "I'll look round to-morrow morning, about this time. Mr. Blaine's likely to be on board then, isn't he?"

"Maybe—can't say for certain; but the chances is as he will be."

"I'll take it at that, then. If, in the meantime, he should ask who called, you can say—Mr. Bruce—of Westminster."

"Right! Mr. Bruce—of Westminster—I won't forget. Hi! hold on a minnit" (as the other turned to go down the gangway on to the quay), "I'm *sure*—now I come to think of it—as he *will* be aboard at this time to-morrow."

"Do you know where he is now?" asked the detective quickly.

"No—I don't! And if you want to know any more, just you wait till to-morrow morning—Mr. Bruce—of Westminster."

Seeing that nothing was to be got out of the man, Doyle left the vessel—a barque-rigged steamer, of rakish build, and of about 900 tons burden. He stopped, however, at the further corner of the quay, in the shadow of one of the warehouses, and stood a while looking intently at the low, black hull of the *Loch Katrine*.

"It's a thousand pities!" he ruminated bitterly, "our people can't persuade the Government to grant a 'detainer' or a search warrant; they're always afraid of offending a foreign somebody, or something. This Blaine hasn't applied for clearing papers up to now; and yet I'm as certain as that my name's Doyle, that she's on the move. I'm just powerless! I've got the case in hand, while the hand is as good as 'cuffed,' for all the free use I have of it. Anyway, I'll be on the spot a couple of hours or so before my stated time; perhaps *that* will trap my bird, and enable me to see if he has anything under his wing."

Then a thought struck him; in a flash it came to him that men who engage in sea-brigandage, of a semi-political sort, often change their names, as a measure of prudence and convenience.

The American invasion of the Philippines was in full blast, and already it had been rumoured that more than one degenerate citizen of the Republic had financed and made common cause with the Malay marauders of the Eastern Seas with the object of preying upon British and American commerce in those waters.

"Supposing his name isn't Blaine! It's just possible. Once I could get him on that, the rest would be easy. It's an odd thing, but nobody's seen him; nobody, that is, whose opinion is worth anything to me. I've got a strange notion that—if I could but put my eyes on him—I should tap the mystery surrounding this same *Loch Katrine*. I'll ask the Dock Superintendent if I may leave a man to watch her till the morning."

But the Superintendent of the Victoria Docks could not quite see his way to this.

"You see, Mr.—er—Doyle, you haven't a shred of documentary authority to go on. Evidently the Government are not sure of their ground, and until I see an official 'detainer' or State warrant, I'm afraid I shouldn't be justified in doing anything which might, for aught I know, be a flagrant breach of international law. The ship is American, at any rate now, though she was bought in this country, and sails under the American flag, and as I burnt my fingers once before with Yankee fire, I am not too eager to risk another pleasure of the same sort."

"Well, I am in the position only to request," said Doyle regretfully; "and there's nothing more for me to do but to have patience till the morning. Perhaps my luck will turn then."

"I hope so," replied the other.

"At least," said Doyle, "you can tell me if you know whether the *Loch Katrine* has given any sign of immediate sailing?"

"Even on that head I know nothing. But there! she cannot possibly 'clear' before to-morrow, I think, and by then something may have turned up to settle the matter one way or the other."

Whatever the detective may have thought, he did not express himself, but with a curt "good-day," left the office, and in a quarter of an hour was in a hansom and on his way to Westminster.

Scarce was his back turned than the door of the port after state-room of the *Loch Katrine* slowly opened, and a man, tall, spare, and cadaverously sallow of face, stepped into the saloon.

Moving quickly across the deck he tapped smartly at the closed door of one of the side cabins.

"Hullo!" came in a muffled voice from within.

"All right, Carter! I want you."

"Beg pardon, Mr. Craf——"

"S——h! man! Blaine, as long as we're in the neighbourhood of this hateful island!"

Hal Carter, the chief officer of the *Loch Katrine*

knew his man too well to keep him waiting long, and in a second or two joined his employer at the saloon table.

"Now, Carter," said the owner of the steamer, "who d'ye think's been paying us a visit this afternoon, eh?"

"Can't say, sir, unless it's 'Lloyd's' man."

"Nary 'Lloyd's,' sonny! what would you say to a sneaking detective, spying round for a loose thread?"

"A detective! They're not going to stop us, after all our precautions, are they?"

"Well, Dyson," said the detective to the sunburnt mercantile-marine man who stood waiting to be questioned.

"Stop us! not if I know it. No; it seems that the British Government half suspect us, but are not quite sure of the facts, so that they won't go the length of a 'detainer' or a search warrant, but just employ a Scotland Yard chap to find out what he can, how he can, all the time smiling at our ambassador, as though they wouldn't entertain a bad opinion of anything American for the world."

"Did the policeman see anything?"

"No, he didn't. You I'd told to keep close in your berth; the half-dozen men that are to work us over to Amsterdam were snugly loafing in the engine-room, also by my orders, and we've no skipper or second-mate. I fancy, too, that my gentleman found an over-tough morsel to chew in old Meyrick."

"Well, he can't do us much harm, anyway."

"Not if I can help it. Now listen, Carter—you are in charge, remember, till we reach Holland where, as you know, we are to ship the arms and ammunition. There too, we shall make up our complement of men; you will give way to Captain Powers, and take up your duties as chief-officer, and then hey! for Luzon and the Bay of Manila at which place I have arranged to meet Mei-ying on the fifteenth of August."

"And we sail?"

"To-night on the ebb. I have the clearing papers—got them half-an-hour ago—and once outside the dock-gates and the river, I defy Scotland Yard and the British Government itself to catch me this side the Scheldt!"

"Shall I call Meyrick in here, and give him his orders?"

"I guess you'd better, for I want to ask him a question or two."

Carter went out through the cuddy and beckoned to Meyrick, who stood by the main-hatch whittling a long piece of hard wood.

"Anything to tell me about that chap who was here awhile ago, Meyrick—did he tell you his name?"

"Mr. Bruce—of Westminster, sir."

"Oh! Mr. Bruce—of Westminster! Well, he's sailed pretty close to the truth. And what did Mr. Bruce—of Westminster—say, when he found he couldn't see anybody?"

"He said, sir, as he'd come again to-morrow morning at the same time; and from what you told me *this*

morning, Mr. Craf—I mean, Mr. Blaine—*I* told *him* as you were sure to be aboard!"

"Meyrick, you're a daisy! Sure to be aboard—yes, but not visible to Mr. Bruce—of Westminster. Ha! ha! ha!"

And so it was that when, the next morning at nine o'clock—a good two hours before the time he had mentioned—Bruce Doyle swung along the road leading to Quay "C." Victoria Docks, the *Loch Katrine's* berth was vacant. She had sailed, ten hours before, on the ebb, for Amsterdam.

CHAPTER II.

The Compact of Blood.

Captain Edward Harvey, British Vice-Consul at Manila, and at this time Acting Consul, looked not a little puzzled over a card which his Philippino servant had just brought in to him.

"I don't know the man! 'Bruce Doyle, Criminal Investigation Department, Scotland Yard.' Chasing some poor beggar, I suppose, who has managed to break through to here. All right, Pablo! show the—er—gentleman in."

"Sit down, Mr. Doyle; we don't often see one of your cloth in Manila. Must be something special, I should think."

"Yes, Captain Harvey—something very special; and if you will be good enough to give me a few moments for explanation, I shall be able to convince you, I think, that it is something which demands your instant and earnest attention."

"Hullo! this sounds exciting. It is not a conventional case, or a conventional criminal, then, that brings you here?"

"No, sir. I am on the track of a man at once the cleverest, the richest, and the most unscrupulous that lives, or ever has lived."

"That's a fairly big order, isn't it?"

"Not half big enough, sir; and when I tell you that the individual in question is the notorious Siever Crafte——"

"Siever Crafte! here—in Manila?"

"Yes, sir! no other; and now you know the man you'll agree with me, I think, that it is no ordinary case or ordinary criminal, with whom we have to deal."

"Let's hear your story, Mr. Doyle," said the Vice-Consul. "Anything about Crafte is interesting; but when it is told within earshot of him, as it were, why—it is positively thrilling!"

"Briefly then, sir, I was instructed, in an informal sort of way, to find out, if I could, the why, what, and wherefore of a certain steamer, the *Loch Katrine*, lying in the export basin at the Victoria Docks, London. The Government suspected that she was loading contraband of war, or, at any rate, was destined for privateering, or similar purposes, but as she flew the Stars and Stripes, and as nothing certain was known, no warrant or detainer was issued."

"That did not give you much of a chance."

"No, sir. Well, I was baffled at every turn, and though the Foreign Office had an idea that Blaine, the owner, who was said to be on board, was suspiciously active in the financing of schemes of this sort, I failed altogether in getting a sight of him.

"The last time I boarded the vessel at the quayside there was no sign of life on deck. Blaine was absolutely invisible, and I had to content myself with the assurance of the quartermaster in charge that the owner would be on board the next morning at the same hour. To be on the right side, however, I determined to be early, but on reaching the docks a couple of hours before the appointed time, I found, to my disgust, that the *Loch Katrine* had cleared ten hours before, and that probably by that time she was a hopeless stern chase.

"To come quickly to the pith of the story I accidentally, as I was leaving the quay, mad almost with disappointment and chagrin, fell up against a chap who, it seems, had been, at the last moment, summarily dismissed by Blaine—for what, I do not know. This man gave me such information—obtained, he told me, by the chance overhearing of a conversation between Blaine and the ship's chief-mate—that, there and then, I decided to make first for Amsterdam, and then, for wherever the news I might get in the Dutch capital might lead me."

"What did you learn?"

"That Blaine and Siever Crafte were one and the same; that twelve hours before my arrival the *Loch Katrine*—renamed the *King of the East*—had left for the Philippines. She had shipped, in record time, a big cargo of arms and ammunition, and a crew of over a hundred men, chiefly Americans, who had arrived the day before on the Atlantic Transport boat from New York.

"Putting two and two together—Siever Crafte and an armed cruiser—I judged myself warranted in following up the trail."

"Quite right! But tell me, have you any idea whereabouts this precious vessel is?"

"No; but my original informant—whom I have brought with me—is at the present moment prosecuting inquiries among the hands by the waterside here, and I don't despair of his finding out something which shall give me a clue to catch Siever Crafte; and to hold him will not only contribute to the peace of these waters, but will settle more than one old score we have against him."

"He is rich, isn't he?"

"Rich, sir! How he got them, no man knows, but he is worth millions—of pounds sterling, not dollars—and it is of course this fact which gives him the power for evil that he undoubtedly possesses."

"Man—for the Señor."

"All right, Pablo; bring him in. It's your 'State evidence,' Mr. Doyle. One word. As this concerns the American people even more than it does us, what we know, and whatever this man may tell us, I must communicate to the United States admiral at once."

"Well, Dyson?" said the detective to the sunburnt, keen-eyed mercantile-marine man who stood, hat in hand, waiting to be questioned.

"The *King of the East*, sir, ex *Loch Katrine*, hove-to off the bar three days ago. Six men left the steamer and were brought by a large 'proa' to Manila. They got drunk, chattered, and let out, before returning to their ship by the same means, that the destination of the *King of the East* was Palawan Bay, on the East, and that they expected to meet there with a number of Malay 'proas' and Chinese junks."

"Is she still off the bar?" cried Harvey.

"No, sir; she was only hove-to four-and-twenty hours, and then steamed away to the eastward."

"Doyle, this is worse than even you imagined. Palawan Bay is the lair of Mei-ying, the Amazon widow of the dead pirate chief, Ching-Yih! Depend upon it, Siever Crafte is bringing his millions and his western fighting methods to combine with that beautiful she-devil!"

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A fixed look, an imperious order or two, together with a few mysterious hand passes, and the pirate-queen was another woman.

"What do you suggest, sir?" queried Doyle, fully as excited as the other.

"First," replied the Vice-Consul, "I will apprise the United States authorities, and then, in the British Consulate steamer, you and I, and the man here, will leave Manila for Palawan to destroy, if we may, this 'compact of blood,' between Mei-ying, the Pirate Queen, and Siever Crafte, the Chicago man of millions."

CHAPTER III.

A Startling Development.

Along the coast-line of Luzon, Mindoro, and the other Philippines, are countless, and, in some instances, naturally impregnable indentations, which form convenient hiding-places and centres for the Malay waterthieves, who issue thence in inconceivable numbers, to plunder and to kill on the slightest provocation.

It was in one of these notches on the Luzon coast, but a mile or two north of the Bay of Palawan, that the dreaded Mei-ying was known to have her headquarters. Her reputation for murderous ferocity and skill in her nefarious profession was such that no one cared to meddle with her, the new American masters of the Philippines having far too much on their hands—in a political and legitimately belligerent way—to be able to give serious attention to a mere piratical detail.

The place was peculiar, half-cave, half-reed and bamboo hut, the latter forming a sort of deep verandah in front of the rock face.

Two people, totally diverse in every respect, sat in two ordinary deck chairs outside engaged in conversation, agreeable evidently to only one of them.

A man and a woman; the latter was remarkable both in appearance and manner.

Very beautiful, in an Eastern sense, her picturesquely gorgeous, if somewhat bizarre costume was a strikingly appropriate and becoming setting for her personal charms.

Her companion we know, for we have met him in London, St. Petersburg, on the Transvaal Veld, and in the shadow of the Great Wall of China.

Siever Crafte, millionaire and mystery-man, does not seem the worse for his bullet-wound that night in the tomb of the Ming Emperors.

"When," asked Mei-ying, who spoke English with hardly the trace of an accent, "when do we begin our war upon these Yankee barbarians?"

"When you will," replied Crafte, lighting a fresh cigar. "But, as I have told you, it can only be on the conditions I have laid down. For years now I have supplied you with money to carry on your trade, and now, because I think the time ripe to take personal action, with a view of getting some of my own back, you put every obstacle in the way."

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An angry light glittered in Mei-ying's eyes, but her voice was soft and plausible as she answered him:

"My friend; I want not to hurt you—to rob you! For long I have known you by my ears, and in my heart as the one who has helped to make me—what I am."

"I know! I know! but wouldn't it be as well to leave sentiment out of it altogether. My account against you for something like six years amounts to considerably over two million dollars, and as I propose, by means of the *King of the East*, and those who man her, and a little aid from your own niggers, to recoup myself, and, I hope, a trifle over, I can't quite see how you can consider yourself in any way hardly done by."

"And is that all? Am I, Mei-ying, to take but a second place in what is done? I will not! I will not!"

"I think you will, or, at all events, you will weigh it well before you decline to play the game, as I have planned it."

"Do you know that I have cut off all communication between this place and your ship yonder; and that I have but to lift my finger and you are a dead man?"

"Possibly, but—I think not likely. It may interest you, Mei-ying, to know that I also have made *my* arrangements and that a certain signal from me to that man yonder on the bridge of the *King of the East* will bring instant ruin upon you and yours. I should advise you, therefore, to think twice before you do anything rash in connection with myself."

Siever Crafte's power as a hypnotist had, in the course of his career, been often tested, and he deemed this an opportune moment for its exercise.

A fixed look, an imperious order or two, together with a few mysterious hand-passes, and the pirate-queen was another woman.

On her brow stood beads of sweat, while her whole body trembled and shuddered in a way hitherto unknown to her.

"Come with me," said Crafte authoritatively, taking her by the hand; and she rose and walked by his side down the sloping path to the shore.

Out in the deep water were gathered more than a score of large "proas," each with their complement of Malay and Chinese cut-throats. On the seaward side of them lay at anchor the *King of the East*, while drawn up on the strand were a few small native boats and a quarter-boat from the steamer.

It was towards this latter that Crafte moved with Mei-ying.

"You will go on board your own 'proa,'" he said roughly to her, "and follow my lead in the steamer."

He then helped her into the boat; gave an order or two to the coxswain in charge, and awaited its return.

In a quarter of an hour the boat came back.

Before Crafte could set his foot in it, the coxswain sprang ashore and motioned him up the strand a little way.

"Well?"

"Do you know, sir, what's coming up round the point?"

"No! What?"

"Two American cruisers and a small private steamer flying the Union Jack."

"I don't believe it! the Yanks are too busy in Manila Bay, and as for a Britisher—you're dreaming man!"

"It's true as gospel, sir. Look! you can see 'em yourself now."

Crafte did not waste time in replying, but he saw the three vessels rounding the extreme western point.

Jumping with a bound into the stern-sheets of his own boat, he bid the men pull for all they were worth for the *King of the East*.

Not a word did he speak till the steamer was reached, and then it was but a brief order to chief-mate Carter, Captain Powers being laid up with fever.

"Up anchor, Carter! Quick, d'ye hear! and head under your last ounce of steam for Formosa!"

The Consulate steamer alone made show of pursuit; the American vessels turning their attention towards the pirate flotilla.

How Mei-ying, left miserably in the lurch by her scoundrelly ally, saw "proa" after "proa" sunk by the big guns of the Yankees; and how her own boat, and one other, managed almost miraculously to beach themselves, she herself, with half-a dozen of her followers, seeking the shelter of the forest a mile or two inland, would take too long in the telling. It may just be said that some weeks later a hunting-party of American Naval Officers came across, in the forest, the corpse of Mei-ying with, round her, the bodies of five of her crew.

* * * * *

Captain Harvey reported, a few days after the surprise at Palawan, that he had chased the *King of the East* for over a hundred miles in the direction of Formosa, and that he had only desisted from the pursuit through Crafte's vessel disappearing in a night fog. In the morning not a trace of the adventurer was to be seen.

* * * * *

The following extract from an article in a London daily, fairly expresses public opinion with regard to the British Government's attitude, and the want of action in the matter of the *Loch Katrine*.

After recapitulating the story of Siever Crafte's enterprise, the article goes on to say:

"The British Government, in the person of the Foreign Office, is ever only too disposed to sleep when it should be especially wide-awake.

"Here was a ship, bought in England by a man whom nobody sees, and which, from the moment that she is berthed in the Victoria Docks, is manifestly an object of suspicion. Now that suspicion has been only too well verified by results, perhaps our Official Masters will acknowledge that a little more energy in similar circumstances in the future is desirable. We understand that the detective who went to the Philippines on the track of this man Crafte has been 'carpeted' for misdirected zeal. This, on the face of it, is unjust, and, in a way, immoral; as, after all, Detective Doyle's theory was from the outset the correct one, and had he but been adequately supported by the authorities this precious American adventurer would not have slipped through our fingers. One consolation we have, albeit a poor one, Crafte's prospects of recovering his millions are now so remote that, wherever he is, he may be advised to write off the debt. His debtor is dead, and he, should he dare to face civilisation again, will assuredly do so with his liberty, if not his life, in his hand."

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HARVEY SEELY'S WIFE.

"YOUR last day? Dear, dear, must you go to-day, Harvey?" said Mrs. Seely, looking across the breakfast table at her son, with affectionate concern.

And her daughters Kitty and Margery echoed her words.

"Couldn't you have got off for another week?" said his father, breaking a hot roll carefully. "Now, that you're partner, though——"

"Now that I'm partner, it's hard work getting off," responded Harvey Seely. "It was all I could do——"

He paused suddenly.

"What was all you could do?" inquired Kitty.

"Well," said Harvey, laying down his knife and fork with a beaming smile, "here goes. Here's the news I've been saving up for you till the last, from a natural modesty. It was all I could do to get things arranged so that I could go on my wedding trip a month hence. I am going to be married."

Kitty's spoon fell into her saucer with a clatter, and Mr. Seely dropped his roll hastily.

"Married!" said Margery breathlessly.

Mrs. Seely alone remained calm.

She rolled up her napkin, put it in its ring and looked at her son through her gold-rimmed glasses composedly.

She felt, however, that this was an important crisis.

When Harvey—their only son—had, with commendable independence, left his pleasant home to "get a start" in the neighbouring city, they had all expected great things of him.

He would be rapidly successful; he would distinguish himself in the profession he had chosen and amass a fortune; and he would woo and win some sweet girl, with a long row of ancestors—the Seelys, being themselves a good old family, were great respecters of blue blood—a host of accomplishments and a heavy dowry.

Their hopes had seemed likely to be fulfilled. Harvey had proved himself possessed of remarkable business qualities; he had risen quickly, and had recently exceeded their wildest ambitions by being made a junior partner of his firm.

All that now remained to be desired was his safe conquest of the beautiful and aristocratic young person of their dreams, with her many talents and substantial inheritance.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the girls were trembling with eagerness; that Mr. Seely fumbled with his watch-chain in nervous suspense, and that Mrs. Seely opened her lips twice before she found strength to propound the all-important question:

"Who is she?"

"She is a Miss Dora Berdan at present," said Harvey smilingly.

"Berdan?" Mrs. Seely repeated, and raised her brows inquiringly. "I don't think I have heard of the family."

"That's quite likely," Harvey rejoined. "They are quite people."

"Berdan!" Mrs. Seely repeated musingly. "No, I have not heard of them. Where do they live?"

"In Weyman Street," responded Harvey.

Mrs. Seely fell back in her chair with a little gasp; her husband turned a dismayed face upon his son; and Kitty and Margery gave little screams.

Weyman Street! It was miles from the region of aristocracy; it was peopled with working girls, and seamstresses and small shopkeepers; with street-vendors and old apple-women for all the Seelys knew.

"Not Weyman Street, Harvey?" said his father appealingly.

"Certainly; Weyman Street," Harvey repeated.

"But she is not—she cannot be of good family, living in Weyman Street?" said Mrs. Seely, anxiously.

"The family is quite respectable," her son responded quietly. "Dora's mother is a widow. She sews for a lace-goods house, and Dora has been assistant bookkeeper in our establishment; that is how I met her."

Mrs. Seely groaned.

"A book-keeper—a seamstress!" she ejaculated. "Oh, Harvey, you could not have done worse!"

"A penniless girl!" said his father, solemnly. "And after all we have hoped for you! No; it could not be worse."

"A common working-girl!" said Kitty, in a choking voice. "And everybody will know it! Oh, Harvey, it couldn't be worse!"

The young man looked from one to another in astonished, hurt, and half-contemptuous silence.

Margery turned to him with a gentle sympathy mingling with the dismay in her face.

"Perhaps," she said hopefully—"perhaps there is something to make up? Perhaps she is a wonderful beauty, or a great genius, or something?"

Harvey gave her a grateful smile.

"I think her pretty, of course," he said. "But I suppose that's because I'm fond of her. I don't think she would be called a beauty. And as for genius—she's very clever at accounts; but she doesn't sing, or paint, or anything of that sort. She's never had the time or money for such things, poor girl!"

But Margery had turned away with an impatient gesture.

"There is nothing then," she said despairingly. "No, it couldn't be worse!"

Harvey rose from his seat, and pushed the chair back noisily.

"This is absurd," he said indignantly. "It is more than absurd; it is unjust and narrow-minded. How sensible—presumably sensible people," Harvey corrected, rather bitterly, "can say, in regard to a person they have never seen, that 'it could not be worse,' is past my comprehension."

"We will not talk of it," said Mrs. Seely, holding up a restraining hand. "Discussion will not mend matters. And you are to be married next month?"

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"On the ninth," Harvey rejoined. "Of course you will be there?" he added, rather dubiously.

"By no means," said his father shortly.

"You could hardly expect it," said Mrs. Seely reproachfully.

"Very well; 'if Mahommed won't come——' You've heard the observation. We shall pay you a visit immediately on our return from our wedding tour, with your kind permission. You must know Dora."

When he left the house, an hour later, he had the required permission.

His mother and the girls had even kissed him good-bye in an injured and reproachful way; and his father had shaken hands, coolly.

But his ears still rang with that odious assertion. "It could not be worse!" and he was thoughtful all the way back to the city.

* * * * *

The Seelys were in a state of subdued excitement.

Harvey's wedding tour was completed; and they had received a telegram that afternoon to the effect that he would arrive to-night, with his new wife.

The dining-room table was set for dinner; and Mrs. Seely wandered from one end of it to the other nervously.

Her husband sat under the chandelier with his evening newspaper; but he was not reading it. Kitty and Margery fluttered about uneasily, watching through the window for the carriage from the railway station.

"I hope," said Margery, with a nervous attempt at cheerfulness, "that she will be fairly decent—presentable. Think of the people who will call! I hope she won't be worse than we're prepared to see her."

"She couldn't be," said Mrs. Seely dismally.

There was a roll of wheels, and the twinkle of the carriage-lamp at the door, and the bell rang sharply.

Kitty and Margery clasped hands in sympathetic agitation; Mr. Seely dropped his newspaper and rose; and Mrs. Seely advanced towards the hall door with dignity.

It opened wide before she could reach it, and Harvey entered, his face suffused with genial, blissful smiles.

"This is my wife," he said proudly. "My mother, Dora; my father; my sisters Kitty and Margery!"

And, with a caressing touch, he took her by the hand and led forward among them—

What?

Mr. Seely gazed with wide-open eyes; Mrs. Seely dropped the hand she had started to hold out, with her face growing ashy, and Kitty and Margery gasped.

For what they saw was a woman of apparently forty years, with a face powdered and painted in the most unblushing manner, with thin grey hair crimped over a wrinkled forehead in a sickening affectation of youthfulness, and with a diminutive, gaily-trimmed bonnet perched thereon; with an affected, mincing gait and a simpering smile.

"This is my wife," Harvey repeated. "Have you no welcome for her?"

The bride tittered.

"P'raps they think I ain't good enough for 'em, dear?" she observed tartly.

"Impossible, my pet," Harvey responded; and patted her falsely-blooming cheek affectionately. "Besides, if you were but a shadow—a caricature of your beautiful self, they would not have been surprised. They were prepared for the worst."

He looked at his horrified relations meaningly.

The truth of his words flashed over them.

Yes, they had all said, repeatedly, that "it could not be worse." But this wretched, wrinkled, bedizened creature—had they dreamt of this?

Harvey watched them with an undisturbed smile—his father, turning away at last and rubbing his forehead with his handkerchief weakly; Mrs. Seely, gazing at her daughter-in-law with a dreadful fascination, and the girls sinking into chairs in dismayed silence.

"Well, mother," said Harvey lightly, "of course a new addition to the family is an object of interest; but don't forget that I have an appetite, and getting married has rather improved it. Take off your bonnet, my own. Here, Kitty!"

Kitty came forward with a set face and tightly-closed lips, to receive the marvellous combination of beads and silk flowers held out to her with a disgusting air of sprightliness. She was afraid to trust herself to speak.

Poor Mrs. Seely, sick at heart, had made her way to the bell and rang it, and dinner was served presently.

"Turtle soup!" the bride observed, looking round the table with a girlish smile; "ain't nothing I admire so! Just pass that celery, father-in-law. Delicious! ain't it, darling?"

"Extremely, my dear," said the bridegroom complacently.

Ignorant and vulgar! What dreadful things would they discover next?

It was an evening they never forgot. The unfortunate parents sat with pale faces and unsteady hands, staring into their empty plates, or looking at each other with fresh horror at each simpering, senseless, ungrammatical remark of their terrible daughter-in-law.

Kitty and Margery excused themselves during the second course, and flew to their rooms to cry themselves to sleep in an agony of dismay and mortification.

"I shan't think of setting up," said the bride, rising from the table with an apologetic giggle, and with the last of her dessert held aloft. "I'm too wore out. If anybody calls—o' course everybody'll call—just tell 'em I'll see 'em to-morrow. Come on, dear!"

And she tripped upstairs, with a juvenile nod over her shoulder, and with her beaming young husband following.

Mrs. Seely wrung her hands despairingly.

"We said it could not be worse," she said faintly. "But this! How shall we endure it?"

"I shall not endure it!" said her hsuband; his face had grown almost careworn during the last two hours. "I shall send them packing to-morrow, and if he ever enters my house again——"

He brought his hand down on the table threateningly.

"But that will not help matters," said his wife miserably. "He is ruined; we are disgraced; and everybody will know it."

There was a silence.

"I had pictured her to myself," said Mrs. Seely, beginning to sob, "as a young girl—a person of suitable age for my poor, misguided boy, decently educated, and at least a lady. And even then, when I did not doubt that it was such a one he had chosen, I thought myself the most unhappy creature in the world, because she had not wealth and an old name. Surely it is a judgment upon us. Oh, was there ever so dreadful a thing?"

"Probably not!" said her husband grimly.

It was a solemn group that waited in the dining-room, next morning, for the appearance of the newly-wedded couple.

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Mr. Seely stood in front of the fireplace, watching the door with a stern face. He was master in his own house at least, and he was determined that he should not be disgraced by his son's wife for another hour.

No one appeared anxious to mention the subject which was uppermost in everyone's thoughts, but at last——

"Please get them away before anybody comes, papa!" said Kitty. "It would be dreadful if anybody were to see her!"

"Dreadful!" Margery echoed, with a groan. "What can Harvey possibly have seen in such a creature? The very thought of her, as we saw her last night, makes me ill."

There were footsteps on the stairs.

Mrs. Seely turned with a shiver, and the girls caught their breath.

The door opened.

The waiting group looked up slowly. Would she not be still more terrible in the broad daylight—that artificial, simpering horror?

But it was not the sight they were prepared to see which the open door disclosed; it was not a painted, powdered semblance of a woman who came in slowly, with a timid smile and downcast eyes.

It was a slender, sweet-faced young lady, with shining brown hair crowning a charming head, peachy cheeks, in which the colour came and went, and soft, dark eyes, which studied the carpet in pretty timidity; with dainty, slippered feet, and a lace-trimmed wrapper, fitting snugly to a perfect form.

"Good morning," she said gently.

Harvey had followed her closely.

"Well, Dora," he said, looking from one to another of his speechless relatives quizzically, "they don't seem inclined to speak to you."

But Margery had come towards her hastily, and seized both of her hands.

"Was it you all the time?" cried Margery, joyfully. "And the grey hair was false, and the wrinkles were put on, and all that dreadful powder? Oh, Harvey, how could you?"

"I begged him not to," said the pretty bride, raising her dark eyes sweetly. "I told him it was cruel; and such a time as I had, saying all those shocking things he had taught me, and keeping my wig straight, and trying not to laugh. You can't think how difficult it was, and all the while I felt so ashamed of myself. Will you ever forgive us?"

"Forgive you! Oh, my dear!" cried Mrs. Seely incoherently.

And she hurried forward, with a sob of joy, and embraced her daughter-in-law wildly.

"It was rather rough," said Harvey gaily. "I felt like a villain when I saw the way you all took it. But you know what you said, every one of you—that it 'couldn't be worse.' I thought I'd demonstrate to you that it could. Dora is nineteen instead of forty, she can speak correctly when she makes an effort; and I can heartily recommend her for a 'willing and obliging,' good-tempered and thoroughly capable girl—the sweetest in the world."

Mr. Seely left the fireplace and came and clasped his daughter-in-law in his arms, with a beaming face, and Kitty kissed her effusively.

"It was a dreadful lesson," said Mrs. Seely, looking up with a tearful smile; "but I am afraid we needed it, my son."

EMMA A. OPPER.

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CONCERNING OLIVE.

UNDER its swirl of ruffled muslin Polly's heel gave a little vicious dig into the earth that sent the gaily-coloured hammock forward. Polly frowned disapprovingly at her smart little shoes and the glimpse of silk mesh above them; frowned, too, at her slender, ringless hands with their pink shining nails.

The country—for Polly, foreseeing that between her mother and Mr. Dillingham she would become Mrs. Dillingham in spite of herself, had taken to her heels and fled to the country.

Polly, in the gay hammock, swung slowly. She looked dejectedly at her slim hand. The flashing diamond that Mr. Dillingham wanted to place there wouldn't have been so bad; Mr. Dillingham, himself, was better than—nobody.

Polly was very dejected. Below these heights, in her world, there were dances, dinners—men.

She sat up very straight, for the man—big, brown, and splendid—who towered above her, was holding out his hand to her, and his eyes were so engagingly blue.

"Olive knew that you were here," he said; "she has just written me about it. She asked me to hunt you up—and there were lots of messages about the old schooldays." He smiled down on her.

Polly caught at those words as a drowning man clutches at a straw. There was only one Olive and she had married Tom—Polly's brain worked frantically—Tom Tate, of course.

She beamed on Mr. Tate. She was pleased with herself at the rush of memory that had saved the situation from awkwardness—for it is awkward to have forgotten the name of the man who has married your dearest school friend.

Mr. Tate was not handsome, but bronzed, and his vital, frank personality was irresistible. He talked gaily; of Olive, and her friendship for Polly; of boat races and football games, and, at parting, he held Polly's hand a trifle longer than custom decreed, and looked into her eyes with eyes that spoke unuttered things.

Given a man, a maid, and a moon—even a baby moon—and the combination is not without danger.

Tate fell quickly into the habit of dropping in on Pauline—she was Polly to her special friends—at all hours. There was a dairy, and she played dairymaid while he superintended the making of the golden pats of butter; there were books, and they read, or seemed to read; there was a piano, and she played and sang for him; there was a lake on which they floated idly.

Once, in pursuit of a squirrel, they went deeper and deeper into the wood. Tate's gun was in his hand, he was in the country for the shooting. But in the big, silent wood they found no squirrels, and that night Polly brought up her thoughts with a little shiver. She had been trying so hard to remember all the tender little things concerning Olive during their schooldays, trying to remember the look in her eyes as she bade her good-bye, and it was Olive's husband's eyes that looked into hers. A vague fear of herself assailed her.

"What are his eyes to me?" she said angrily. "What is he to me? It's preposterous!" She blew out her light, having suddenly felt a longing for home and her mother's arms. Safe in the knowledge of her resolution to return home, she avoided Tate diligently next day, but at sunset she walked through the odour of the sweet, old-fashioned garden to where the hammock swung, disconsolate.

He came; perhaps she had gone there knowing the fact. Oh, the sweet poison that lurks in renunciation! The evening was warm and soft; the wind stirred his fair hair; and he played—strange, sweet tunes that hinted things beyond the telling.

In spite of the warm air Polly shivered. She wasn't responsible while that moon looked on—it put strange thoughts in her head. As if divining those thoughts, Tate suddenly bent forward and took her hand. "Why do you avoid me?" he asked tenderly.

A married flirt! Married, too, to her dearest friend. How could she think tenderly of such a contemptible and treacherous creature.

"Because," she stammered, "I despise you."

"I don't understand you," Tate said, in a bewildered way.

"Perhaps you understand Olive better?"

"Yes."

"What explanation will you give?"

"Explanation?"

"A model husband!" sneered Polly.

"A bachelor until time ends," corrected Tate. "I'm thirty and you are twenty, Polly, but the dream was sweet."

"And Olive," asked Polly, in a hard little voice, "what would she do?"

"Did you know? I didn't know she ever told a living soul."

"What?" breathed Polly.

"Tom's all right," Tate exclaimed, "but sometimes at a dance or card party, he takes too much and it goes to his head. I save Olive from it, always, I hardly thought she realised."

"Does Olive love Tom, her husband?" Polly put the question hesitatingly.

"Good Heavens!" said Tate.

Polly laughed—a low, contented laugh—she moved nearer to Tate.

"What does Olive call you?" she asked.

"I don't know what you are driving at," Tate said, "but Olive calls me Rob; most women call their brothers-in-law by their Christian name."

"Yes," said Polly, "yes." She slipped her warm fingers into his.

"You are a very peculiar young person," said Tate.

"Yes," Polly spoke humbly, "but my friends love me in spite of the peculiarities." Suddenly she swayed towards him. "Love me, Rob," she pleaded.

As Tate swept her into his arms, the moon, having freed itself from the hill and swung off into space, looked from behind a silver-lined cloud, then discreetly withdrew.

S. L. COLEMAN.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

"**H. L.**"—You both want to get married, but her parents object. Should she defy them? I certainly do not suggest that she should. But if you are sure that you are destined for each other, and are yourself in a position to keep her, I think you should let her parents know that nothing will interfere with your decision, and point out that it would be better for their daughter's happiness if they gave their consent, rather than bring about a runaway marriage and its consequences.

"**In Difficulties.**"—Don't think me unkind, but my whole idea is to tell you what seems to me the truth about the matter. The gentleman you describe is a type of flirt about which we women should know a good deal, so as to avoid deception. He is a young man, and you are, well, a widow in your prime. He is very popular with other ladies, and has an enormous opinion of himself. At the same time, you think he likes you. You say you have an idea that he wishes to draw you on by his manner. I think that is very likely indeed. Those kinds of young men often live only for that object with all women, towards whom they seldom have any serious intentions. I don't wish to suggest all this about him, but I must tell you how your description strikes me, and leave it to you to judge whether it applies to him.

"**Shy Male.**"—I am afraid I cannot tell you off-hand of any young lady in the districts of Tottenham or Stamford Hill anxious to make a young man's acquaintance. But there must be a great many. I am glad you do not go in for flirting like your acquaintances, and hope it will not be long before some nice young lady comes your way. You are, you say, shy. But as you are only nineteen, that is not unusual. In another two years, you should soon have got over that. There are so many ways in which young men and women can meet, if people only know how to deport themselves. I have given several hints on this point in *Pearson's Weekly*, but may as well repeat that you must be good at social gatherings, must make yourself look as attractive as possible, and when you meet one nice girl, try and secure another meeting, ask if you may call at her home, or which are her favourite bicycle rides or walks, where she spends her time, and other things that ought to bring you into further touch with her. But remember that proverb about "faint heart."

"**Ralph**" is in despair over one trait in the character of the girl he is engaged to. She will persist in making fun of other people, and, though he has repeatedly begged her not to, she persists in her silly behaviour. He asks what he can do to cure her, as he cannot bear to think that when she is his wife she will turn to ridicule all the sayings and doings of people she mixes with.———I think you take the matter too much to heart, "Ralph." Ask her quietly to try for your sake to check this habit, and I feel sure she will do all she is able to cure herself of it. You must remember that a habit of a lifetime cannot be overcome in a few days, so you must be patient with her.

"**Anxious and Hopeful One**" wants to know what she could do to pass away her time at home, as she is quite deaf and her eyes are not very strong.———Your eyes being bad makes it difficult for you to do much in the way of home employment, "Hopeful One," knitting or crochet being about the two most simple things to do in which the eyesight is not much needed. I should advise you to go to a really good doctor, tell him plainly how matters stand, and see if he could get you into some hospital where they would do you some permanent good. Surely the clergyman of your parish or some other kindly soul would interest themselves in your case. I can quite understand how miserable and downhearted you must feel.

"**Mother of Three**" writes me a very pitiful letter. Her husband has met with an accident, and has had to give up his business; they are very poor, but have just enough to keep them from starvation. A rich cousin has offered to adopt one of her children on the condition that his parents shall never see him again. She feels that she cannot part with her eldest boy, and it would break her heart to part with either of her twin babies.———I am so sorry for you, "Mother of Three," and quite understand your feelings in the matter. So long as you have health and strength, and just enough to live on, I feel sure you will be doing right by your children in keeping them with you. After all, no other love makes up for a mother's, does it?

"**Victoria F.**" and her sweetheart have had a quarrel, since which she has been asked to his brother's wedding. She wants to know whether she should go, as her sweetheart will be there? The cause of their estrangement was that the young man had been keeping company with another young lady, who had, however, since given him up.———I am sorry to hear of your little trouble; but I cannot suggest a more excellent preparation towards a reconciliation than your attending the wedding. The marriage ceremony is a splendid advertisement for the matrimonial state, and few men or women can attend one without turning their thoughts in that direction themselves. Now you and your estranged lover will both be there. You will both think of matrimony, and will both realise that the partner of your respective hearts is in that very place of worship. Could anything but a complete reconciliation come of such a thing, supposing, of course, that you still love each other?

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXIII. (*continued*).

TOWARDS eleven o'clock, as the lights in the hostelry opposite were burning low, I descended and made my way out into the now deserted street. The troopers had apparently seen fit—or else been ordered to seek their beds, for the place had grown silent, and a servant was in the act of making fast the door for the night. The door was half-closed, and a man carrying a lanthorn was making fast the bolt, whistling aimlessly to himself. Through the half of the door that was yet open, I beheld a window from which the light fell upon a distant corner of the courtyard.

I drew near the fellow with the lanthorn, in whom I recognised René, the hostler, and as I approached he flashed the light upon my face; then, with a gasp, "M. de Luynes!" he exclaimed, remembering me from the time when I had lodged at the *Lys de France* four months ago.

"Sh!" I whispered, pressing a *louis d'or* into his hand. "Whose window is that, René?" And pointed towards the light.

"That," he replied, "is the room of the lieutenant and the gentleman in the mask."

"I must take a look at them, René; and whilst I am looking I shall search my pocket for another *louis*. Now let me in."

"I dare not, Monsieur. Maître Bernard may call me, and if the doors are not closed——"

"Come, come," I broke in; "I shall stay but a moment."

"But——"

"And you will have easily earned a *louis d'or*. If Bernard calls you tell him that you have let something fall, and that you are seeking it. There, let me pass."

I got past him at last, and made my way swiftly towards the other end of the quadrangle. As I approached, the sound of voices smote my ear, for the lighted window stood open. I stopped within half-a-dozen paces of it, and climbed on to the step of the coach that stood there. Thence I could look straight into the room, whilst the darkness hid me from the eyes of those I watched.

Three men were there; Montrésor, the sergeant of his troop, and a tall man dressed in black and wearing a black silk mask. This I concluded to be St. Auban, despite the profusion of fair locks that fell from his shoulders, concealing, I rightly guessed, his natural hair, which was as black as my own. It was a cunning addition to his disguise, and one well calculated to lead people on to the wrong scent hereafter.

Presently, as I watched them, St. Auban spoke, and his voice was that of a man whose gums are toothless, or else whose nether lip is drawn in over his teeth whilst he speaks. Here again the dissimulation was as effective as it was simple.

"So that is concluded," were the words that reached me. "To-morrow we will install our men at the Château, for while we remain here it is preposterous to lodge them at an inn. On the following day I hope that we may be able to set out again."

"If we could obtain fresh horses——" began the sergeant, when he of the mask interrupted him.

"What! Think you my purse is bottomless? We return as we came, with the Cardinal's horses. What signify a day or two, after all? Come, call the landlord to light me to my room."

I had heard enough. But, more than that, whilst I listened an idea of a sudden sprung up in my mind which did away with the necessity of gaining speech with Montrésor—a contingency this, moreover, that now presented insuperable difficulties.

So I got down softly from my perch and made my way out of the yard, and, after fulfilling my part of the bargain with René, across to the *Vigne d'Or* and to my room, there to sit and mature the plan that of a sudden I had conceived.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Of the Passing of St. Auban.

HEAVENS! What an ado there was next day at Blois, when the news came that the troopers had installed themselves at the Château de Canaples, and that the Chevalier had been arrested for treason by order of the Lord Cardinal, and that he would be taken to Paris, and probably—the scaffold.

Men gathered in little knots at street corners, and with sullen brows and threatening gestures they talked of the affair; and the more they talked, the more clouded grew their looks, and more than one anti-cardinist *pasquinade* was heard in Blois that day.

Given a leader, those men would have laid hands upon pikes and muskets, and gone to the Chevalier's rescue. As I observed them, the thought did cross my mind that I might contrive a pretty fight in the rose garden of Canaples were I so inclined. And so inclined I should indeed have been but for the plan that had come to me like an inspiration from above, and which methought would prove safer in the end.

To carry out this plan of mine I quitted Blois at nightfall with my two knaves, having paid my reckoning at the *Vigne d'Or*, and given out that we were journeying to Tours. We followed the road that led to Canaples, until we reached the first trees bordering the park. There I dismounted, and leaving Abdon to guard the horses I made my way on foot, accompanied by Michelot, towards the garden.

We gained this, and were on the point of quitting the shadow of the trees when, of a sudden, by the light of the crescent moon, I beheld a man walking in one of the alleys not a hundred paces from where we stood. I had but time to seize Michelot by the collar of his doublet and draw him towards me. But as he trod quickly backwards a twig

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snapped 'neath his foot with a report that in the surrounding stillness was like a pistol shot.

I caught my breath as he who walked in the garden stood still, his face, wrapped in the shadows of his hat, turned towards us.

"Who goes there?" he shouted. Then, getting no reply, he came resolutely forward, whilst I drew a pistol wherewith to welcome him did he draw too near.

On he came, and already I had brought my pistol to a level with his head, when fortunately he repeated his question, "Who goes there?" and this time I recognised the voice of Montrésor, the very man I could then most wish to meet.

"Hist! Montrésor!" I called softly. "'Tis I,—de Luynes."

"So," he exclaimed, coming closer to me, "you have reached Canaples at last!"

"At last!" I echoed.

"Whom have you there?" he inquired abruptly.

"Only Michelot."

"Bid him fall behind a little."

When Michelot had complied with this request, "You see, M. de Luynes," quoth the officer, "that you have arrived too late."

There was a certain coldness in his tone that made me seek by my reply to sound him.

"Indeed, I trust not, my friend. With your assistance I hope to get M. de Canaples from the clutches of St. Auban."

He shook his head.

"It is impossible that I should help you," he replied with increased coldness. "Already once for your sake have I broken faith with those who pay me by setting you in position to forestall St. Auban and get M. de Canaples away before his arrival. Unfortunately you have dallied on the road, M. de Luynes, and Canaples is already a prisoner—a doomed one, I fear."

"Is that your last word, Montrésor?" I inquired sadly.

"I am sorry," he answered in softened tones, "but you must see that I cannot do otherwise. I warned you; more you cannot expect of me."

I sighed, and stood musing for an instant; then, "You are right, Montrésor. Nevertheless I am still grateful to you for the warning you gave me in Paris. God pity and help Canaples! Farewell, Montrésor. I do not think you will see me again."

He took my hand, but as he did so he pushed me back into the shadow from which I had stepped to proffer it to him.

"Beware!" he ejaculated. "The moon was full upon your face, and did St. Auban chance to look out he must have seen you."

I followed the indication of his thumb and noted the lighted window to which he pointed. A moment later he was gone, and as I joined Michelot I chuckled softly to myself.

For two hours and more I sat in the shrubbery, conversing in whispers with Michelot, and watching the lights in the Château die out one by one, until St. Auban's widow, which opened on the terrace balcony, was the only one that was not wrapped in darkness.

I waited a little while longer, then rising I cautiously made a tour of inspection. Peace reigned everywhere, and the only sign of life was the sentry, who with musket on shoulder paced in front of the main entrance, a silent testimony of St. Auban's mistrust of the Bloisois and of his fears of a possible surprise.

Satisfied that everyone slept, I retraced my steps to the shrubbery where Michelot awaited me, watching the square of light, and after exchanging a word with him I again stepped forth.

When I was halfway across the intervening space of garden, treading with infinite precaution, a dark shadow obscured the window, which a second later was thrown open. Crouching hastily behind a boxwood hedge, I watched St. Auban—for I guessed that he it was—as he leant out and gazed skywards.

For a little while he remained there, then he withdrew, leaving the casement open, and presently I caught the grating of a chair on the parquet floor within. If ever the gods favoured mortal, they favoured me at that moment.

The Richest Coalfield in England.

MORE MONEY FOR MINERS' WIVES.

The richest undeveloped coalfield in England is about to be opened up, and the increased work to be obtained will no doubt mean more money for miners and miners' wives. The new coalfield lies east of Rotherham and south of Doncaster and already a pit is being sunk at Dinnington. Quite close to this very spot there has recently been accomplished a remarkable cure by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness. Mr. Joseph Harrison, an engineman at Kilnhurst Chemical Works, and residing at 9 Rossington Street, Denaby Main, is the person who has such good cause to be thankful for his present state of health. A "Rotherham Advertiser" reporter who called upon him learned the following facts. Mr. Harrison said:—"I have been a great sufferer from biliousness and indigestion; and these two complaints were for a long time the cause of much pain, worry and expense. My symptoms were well marked. In consequence of the obstinacy of the indigestion, I was unable to take a sufficient quantity of nutritive food to maintain my strength, and after even a light meal the pain I suffered was often intense. I grew very depressed and low-spirited—a condition which was aggravated by my inability to obtain any sleep for night after night. My natural buoyancy of mind and body so forsook me that there was no pleasure either at home or at work. The doctor visited me and I took his medicine but it was of little use and I still continued in pain.

"Some weeks ago a friend advised me to try Chas. Forde's Bile Beans as he said they had cured him of indigestion and biliousness. I did as he recommended. Since then I have had good cause to thank him for his advice; for before long I began to feel that the Beans were effecting a cure. I commenced to eat and enjoy my food and gradually I progressed until now—to use a north-country sportsman's expression—I feel 'as well and hearty as a hare.' I attribute this exclusively to Bile Beans."

Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness, which accomplished the above cure, are a certain cure for indigestion, biliousness, sleeplessness, colds, chill, rheumatism, anæmia, constipation, piles, congestion of the liver, headache, neuralgia, fainting fits, attacks of dizziness, flatulence, pains in the chest, loins or back, defective secretion of bile, wasting affections, female irregularities, gout, and the host of ailments having a common origin in impurity of the blood, a general congestion of the system and loss of vital force.

Obtainable from all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, one and three halfpence or two and ninepence.

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Stealthily as a cat I sprang towards the terrace, the steps to which I climbed on hands and knees. Stooping, I sped silently across it until I had gained the flower-bed immediately below the window that had drawn me to it. Crouching there—for did I stand upright my chin would be on a level with the sill—I paused to listen for some moments. The only sound I caught was a rustle, as of paper. Emboldened, I took a deep breath, and standing up, I gazed straight into the chamber.

By the light of four tapers in heavy silver sconces, I beheld St. Auban seated at a table littered with parchments, over which he was intently poring. His back was towards me and his long black hair hung straight upon his shoulders. On the table, amid the papers, lay his golden wig and black mask, and on the floor, in the centre of the room, his back and breast of blackened steel and his sword.

It needed but little shrewdness to guess those parchments before him to be legal documents touching the Canaples estates, and his occupation that of casting up exactly what profit he would reap from his infamous work of betrayal.

So intent was the hound upon his calculations, that my cautious movements passed unheeded by him as I got astride of the window ledge. It was only when I swung my right leg into the room that he turned his head, but before his eyes reached me I was standing upright and motionless within the chamber.

I have seen fear of many sorts writ large upon the faces of men of many conditions, from the awe that blanches the cheek of the boy soldier when first he hears the cannon thundering, to the terror that glazes the eye of the vanquished swordsman who at every moment expects the deadly point in his heart. But never had I gazed upon a countenance filled with such abject, ghastly terror as that which came over St. Auban's when his eyes met mine that night.

He sprang up with an inarticulate cry that sank into something that I can but liken to the rattle which issues from the throat of expiring men. For a second he stood where he had risen, then terror loosened his knees, and he sank back into his chair. His mouth fell open, and the trembling lips were drawn down at the corners like those of a sobbing child; his cheeks turned whiter than the lawn collar at his throat; and his eyes, wide open in a horrid stare, were fixed on mine, and, powerless to avert them, he met my gaze, cold stern, and implacable.

For a moment we remained thus, and I marvelled greatly to see a man whose heart, if full of evil, I had yet deemed stout enough, stricken by fear into so parlous and pitiful a condition.

Then I had the explanation of it as he lifted his right hand and made the sign of the cross, first upon himself, then in the air, whilst his lips moved, and I guessed that to himself he was muttering some prayer of exorcising purport. There was the solution of the terror-sweat that stood out in beads upon his brow; he had deemed me a spectre—the spectre of a man he believed to have foully done to death on a spot across the Loire visible from the window at my back.

At last he sufficiently mastered himself to break the awful silence.

"What do you want?" he whispered; then his voice gaining power as he used it, "Speak!" he commanded. "Man or devil, speak!"

I laughed for answer, harshly, mockingly; for never had I known a fiercer, crueller mood. At the sound of that laugh, satanical though may have been its ring, he sprang up again, and unsheathing a dagger he took a step towards me.

"We shall see of what you are made," he cried. "If you blast me in the act, I'll strike you."

I laughed again, and raising my arm I gave him the nozzle of a pistol to contemplate.

"Stand where you are, St, Auban, or by the God above us I'll send *your* ghost a-wandering," quoth I coolly.

My voice, which, I take it, had nothing ghostly in it, and still more the levelled pistol which of all implements is the most unghostly, dispelled his dread. The colour crept slowly back to his cheeks, and his mouth closed with a snap of determination.

"Is it indeed you, master meddler?" he said. "Why! I thought you dead these three months."

"And you are overcome with joy to find that you were in error, eh, Marquis? We Luynes die hard."

"It seems so, indeed," he answered with a cool effrontery, past crediting in one who but a moment ago had looked so pitiful. "What do you seek at Canaples?"

"Many things, Marquis. *You* among others."

"You have come to murder me," he cried, and again alarm overspread his countenance.

"Hoity, toity, Marquis! We do not all follow the same trade. Who talks of murder? Faugh!"

Again he took a step towards me, but again the nozzle of my pistol drove him back. To have pistolled him there and then, as he deserved, would have brought the household about my ears, and that would have defeated my object. To have fallen upon him and slain him with silent steel would have equally embarrassed me, as you shall understand anon.

"You and I had a *rendezvous* at St. Sulpice des Reaux," I said calmly, "to which you came with a band of hired assassins. For this you deserve to be shot like the dog you are. But I have it in my heart to be generous to you," I added, in a tone of irony. "Come, take up your sword."

"To what purpose?"

"Do you question me? Take up your sword, man, and do my bidding; thus shall you have a slender chance of life. Refuse, and I pistol you without compunction. So now put on that wig and mask."

When he had obeyed me in this, "Now listen, St. Auban," I said. "You and I are going together to that willow copse whither three months ago you lured Yvonne de Canaples for the purpose of abducting her. On that spot you and I shall presently face each other sword in hand, with none other to witness our meeting save God, in whose hands the issue lies. That is your chance. At the first sign that you meditate playing me any tricks that chance is lost to you." And I tapped my pistol significantly. "Now climb out through that window."

When he had done so, I bade him stand six paces away whilst I followed, and to discourage any foolish indiscretion on his part, I again showed him my pistol.

He answered me with an impatient gesture, and by the light that fell on his face I saw him sneer.

"Come on, you fool," he snarled, "and have done threatening. I'll talk to you in the copse. And tread softly lest you arouse the sentry on the other side."

(To be continued.)

Why Aren't They?

LONDONER: "What fine air you have out here, it's so much fresher than in London." Farmer: "Jess so! That's jest what I was saying to my old woman. Why ain't all these big cities built out in the country."

Realistic.

SHE (poetically): "With this golden bright sky, the sighing of the balmy zephyrs, and the far vista across the foamy waves, one can't but dream they are in sweetest Italy." He: "Good idea. Suppose we have macaroni for dinner!"

PHOTO COMPETITION RESULT.

£5 Notes have been sent to the following in connection with the Photo Competition:

Mrs. MACDONALD (No. 60) 4 Amberley Grove, Leopold Street, Leeds.

Mr. ARTHUR WOOLER (No. 66), 16 Field St., Shipley.

Miss F. A. BRIDGE (No. 70), 5 Granville Street, Kettering.

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For OCTOBER, 1902.

38,199 Prizes value **£15,362**

LIST OF PRIZES:

1	Cash Prize, £100 ...	£100	0
1	Cash Prize, £75	75	0
1	Cash Prize, £50	50	0
1	Cash Prize, £45	45	0
5	Pianos (Walnut Cases), £40 each	200	0
10	Gents' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Ladies' Bicycles (free wheels), £17 17s. each ...	178	10
10	Cash Prizes, £10 each ...	100	0
20	Jones's Sewing Machines, £8 each...	160	0
20	Cases Cutlery, £8 each ...	160	0
20	Cash Prizes, £5 each ...	100	0
100	Dinner Services (55 pieces), £2 10s. each	250	0
100	Gold Filled Gents' Watches, £2 10s. each ...	250	0
100	Ladies' Dressing Bags, £2 5s. each	225	0
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100	Cash Prizes, £2 each ...	200	0
300	Ladies' Travelling Trunks, £2 each	600	0
300	Fancy Bed Quilts, £1 10s. each	450	0
1000	pairs Blankets, £1 per pair	1000	0
500	Basket Arm Chairs, upholstered, £1 each... ...	500	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 15/- ea.	750	0
1000	Gents' Umbrellas, 15s. ea.	750	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, large, 15s. per ½-doz.	300	0
1000	Handsome Meat Carvers, with Steel in Case, 15s. set	750	0
1000	Ladies' Rolled Gold Bracelets, 15s. each ...	£750	0
400	½-doz. Best Electro-plated Forks, small, 14s. per ½-doz.	280	0
1000	pairs of Bed Sheets, 12/6 per pair	625	0
1000	White Linen Table Cloths, 12/6 each	625	0
500	Cash Prizes, 10s. each ...	250	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, large, 9s. per ½-doz.	450	0
1000	½-doz. Table Knives, small, 8s. per ½-doz.	400	0
1000	Ladies' Leather Purses, 8s. each	400	0
1000	Ladies' Umbrellas, 7s. 6d. each	375	0
1000	Ladies' Serge Dress Lengths, 7s. 6d. each ...	375	0
1000	½-doz. Teaspoons (Best Electro-plated), 5s. per ½-doz.	250	0
4000	Ladies' Chatelaine Bags, 5s. each	1000	0
200	Children's Tea Sets, 3s. 6d. each	35	0
6000	½-doz. Ladies' Fine Linen Cambric Handkerchiefs, 2s. 6d. ½-doz.	750	0
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38,199		**£15,362**	**0**

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

The Tablets of **Watson's Matchless Cleanser** and of **Nubolic Soap** are enclosed in distinctive wrappers. The prizes will be awarded in the above order to persons who send the highest numbers of wrappers of either soap or both of them combined to **Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Whitehall Soap Works, Leeds**, not later than October 31st, 1902. Each wrapper must be complete, and each package of wrappers sent will be taken as one lot. Separate entries must be sent under separate covers. Full postage or carriage must be paid. Each parcel must contain the full name and address of the sender, and the number of wrappers sent in must be marked on the same paper. On outside of parcel write legibly "**Prize Competition.**" A list, giving result of the Competition, will be sent with each prize when it is sent out. Every wrapper must have first contained soap. No employee of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited will be eligible. Should any dispute arise as to the contents of any parcel, or any other matter connected with this competition, the decision of Joseph Watson & Sons Limited, Leeds, to be final. All prizes will be despatched on or before December 20th, 1902.

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More Than One.

CUSTOMER: "Some children's shoes, please." Dealer: "Yes, sir. Now, there is an excellent make of shoe. How old is the child?" Customer (with a sigh): "Child! I have nine of them. Show me the wholesale department."

Masculine Woman.

MAC: "That Miss Jumper is dreadfully masculine in her ways." "What does she do?" Mac: "Oh, I've seen her get off the 'bus before it stopped without falling."

Hope for Him.

HE: "I shall never marry until I meet a woman who is my direct opposite." She (encouragingly): "Well, Mr. Duffer, there are numbers of intelligent girls in this neighbourhood."

Fellow Feeling.

DE JONES (haughtily): "I cawn't see, me good man, why you should appeal to me for relief." Tramp: "Well, sor, Oi saw yez borrow somethin' from yer friend down beyant; and as we'd both been broke, Oi thought Oi'd trust to yer fellow-feelin'."

Dad's Fault.

MRS. BROWN: "I'm so sorry you burnt your fingers, Johnny. How was it the cracker went off in your hand?" Little Johnny: "It was all dad's fault. He was coming up the street, and I was going to drop it out of the window on his head, but he walked so slow that the thing went off before he got underneath the window."

A Meek Man.

A DEMURE-LOOKING little man approached the assistant in a grocer's shop, and meekly asked if he had any coffee to sell. "We have ground coffee," said the young man. "No other kind?" "None. This is the best ground coffee on the market." "But I don't want it," the little man braced up. "I got some sugar here the other day with sand in it, and I don't want coffee with ground in it. You must think I want the earth."

Already.

THERE lived in the West of England an enthusiastic geologist—a doctor of divinity and chairman of the Quarter Sessions. A farmer who had seen him presiding on the bench, saw him shortly afterwards seated by the roadside on a heap of stones, which he was busily breaking in search of fossils. The farmer reined up his horse, gazed on him for a minute, shook his head in commiseration of the mutability of human things, then exclaimed in mingled tones of pity and surprise: "What, doctor! Be you come to this already?"

No One Was Ill.

SMITH (to Jones, who has just closed the front door of his boarding-house very softly): "Somebody ill upstairs, Jones?" Jones: "Sh! no; I'm simply behind with my payments again."

The Children's Treat.

MOTHER: "I want you to be good little children this week." Freddie: "What will you give us if we are good?" "If you are really good you can look on when your father shaves himself next Sunday morning."

Strong People.

AWED TOURIST in the Highlands: "Dear me, I don't wonder these natives are so muscular. The guide-book states that their ancestors were in the habit of lifting cattle!"

Helping Her.

HE: "My dear Miss Golding, I should love to assist you in performing all the tasks that fall to your lot." She: "Oh, I have no tasks. I've nothing to do but sit and hold my hands." He: "Well, I should like to assist you in doing even that much."

No Reform Now.

"LOOK here," said the reforming husband, "we must have things arranged in this house so that we shall know just where everything is kept." "With all my heart," sweetly answered his wife; "and let us begin with your late hours, my love. I should dearly love to know where they are kept." He let things run on as usual.

How He Knew.

LAWYER: "Are you sure that occurrence was on the 17th of the month?" Witness: "Yes, it was the 17th." Lawyer: "Now, remember you are under oath. How do you know it was the 17th?" Witness: "'Cause the day before that——" Lawyer: "Be careful what you say, now. Go on." Witness: "——was the 16th and the day after was the 18th."

Didn't Wait to See.

A SCHOOLMASTER was one day instructing his class in a scientific subject, when, wishing to simplify the explanation of a certain point by an everyday illustration, he asked: "Have any of you boys ever stirred up a wasp's nest?" "Yes, sir, I have," promptly answered one of the smaller boys. "Well," said the master, encouragingly, thinking to draw out the boy's intelligence, "what was the result?" "Please, sir, I didn't wait to see," answered the boy.

A Model Husband.

WIFE: "I saw the loveliest lace curtains to-day, only half-a-crown, and I wanted them awfully, but I knew you wished to economise, and so I didn't get them." Husband: "That's too bad, my dear, you should have got them. Anything which adds to your happiness and brings gladness to your eyes, anything which lightens your domestic cares and gilds the lowering clouds, anything which borders with sweet flowers the thorny paths of duty, and appeals pleasantly to your æsthetic nature, making life more worth living, home a paradise, you are welcome, doubly welcome to, my angel, if it doesn't cost more than half-a-crown."

The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 49—54," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, March 3rd, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 49. REBUS.

My first is a mother, my second is a mother, and my whole is a woman's title.

No. 50. ADDITIONS.

Three-quarters of a yard, and a quarter of a nail, will tell you a tale.

No. 51. HIDDEN PROVERB.

AAA D E G HH I KK L MM NN O R S T W Y. These letters, correctly placed, will form a well-known proverb.

No. 52. ACROSTIC.

Initials and finals, read downwards, of the equivalents of the following, will give the names of two well-known authors:

A North American insect.
A river in India.
A river in the United States.
To lie in wait.
To confine.
A well-known explorer.
A town in Scotland.

No. 53. WORD-SQUARE.

From the following letters form a double word-square, the connecting word being a British river:

CC DD EEEEEEEE II LL M NN OOO RRRR TT VV W.

No. 54. ENIGMA.

I mark the spot where heroes fall,
I march with armies o'er the land,
In front of palace, temple, hall,
In dignity I take my stand.

The daily press, without my aid,
Would soon in dire confusion be,
Invoice and ledger from each trade
Be banished eternally.

An emblem of decay I am,
When prone upon the ground I lay,
When broken by an artist's hand,
Untimely death I then portray.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 31 to 36.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mr. Alec Hall, of 21 Coverton Road, Tooting.

A book has been sent to each of the following:
H. Chapperlin, 30 Landseer Road, Upper Holloway.
Mrs. E. Davis, 4 Castle Street, Barnstaple.
Mrs. J. Cowley, 58 Newcastle Avenue, Worksop.
Mrs. E. Hart, 3 Avenue Road, Leamington.
F. Graham, 386 Stanhope Road, South Shields.
A. E. Bunn, 15 Thurnham Street, Liverpool.
A. Wragg, Edensor, Bakewell, Derbyshire.
G. F. Hill, 12 Medlicott Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.
Miss L. Garner, 55 St. Mary's Road, Garston, Liverpool.
W. Hemming, Colet House, Rhyl.

SOLUTIONS.

31. 28.

32. R heims.
O akham.
S hanghai.
E dinburgh.
B ristol.
E ssex.
R ibble.
Y armouth.

33.
W
W A S
W A T E R
H E R
R

34. 5½d.
5½ + 5½ − 6 = 4½d.
4½ + 4½ − 6 = 3d.
3 + 3 − 6 = 0

35. B one.
Y ale.
R ally.
O pen.
N ever = BYRON.

36. INDIA-RUBBER.

A new Serial will start shortly. Look out for further particulars.

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"3 SEPARATE HAIRDRESSERS."—Rostherne, St. Stephen's Road, Bournemouth, November 30th, 1901. Mrs. Lloyd wants to give three bottles of "Tatcho" to some friends here, as a lady in the house is strongly recommending it, and says that three separate hairdressers tell her what a wonderful growth of new hair she has.

"A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY."—Lyss Place, Liss, Hants, November 30th, 1901. I find "Tatcho" a most excellent and pleasing application for the hair; in fact, a wonderful discovery which ought to be very widely known.—H. PELHAM PAPILLON.

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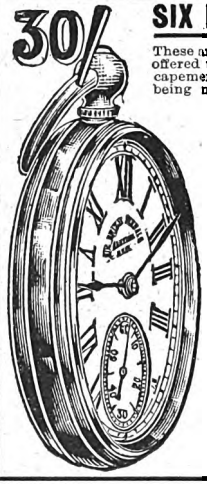

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 687.] For the Week Ending March 1st, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

III.—THE SECRET EXPLOSIVE.

"I WONDER what on earth he wants?" thought Farrell.

He was looking at a telegram he held in his hand.

"*Come at once to Whitehall—important.—A.*"

Lord A. held a high position at the War Department. He had met Edward Farrell on several occasions, and knew of his high scientific attainments.

Farrell was extremely puzzled as to why Lord A —— should wish to see him.

"I suppose the quickest way to find out," continued he, "is to go and see!" so within half-an-hour he was bowling along in a swift hansom towards Whitehall.

Lord A——, a white-haired, clean-shaven aristocrat, greeted him cordially.

"My dear Farrell, I am indeed glad you have come so promptly. I have a most important task for you, if you will undertake it. There is a not inconsiderable element of danger in it, however, so I will put you in possession of a few of the facts before asking you whether you will help me or not."

"Fire away at the facts as hard as you like," Farrell replied; "only before you begin let me say that you may count definitely upon any help that is within my power to give you, danger or no danger."

"Thanks, my dear fellow, I expected you would say as much, and, as you suggest, I will fire away at facts as quickly as possible—for every hour increases the danger."

Lord A—— unlocked a safe that stood in one corner of the room, and produced from its steel-guarded interior a small square leather bag.

This he opened and disclosed to view a carefully-packed and neatly fitted square tin, which contained a brownish-looking, friable powder.

"This," said he, "I received this morning from one of my special foreign agents.

"He obtained it after much danger and at great expense from the War Laboratory of one of the great foreign Powers—never mind which just now—and immediately fled with it to me.

"It is a secret explosive of wonderful power, and it is said that the army using it will have a tremendous advantage over its foes.

"We have been trying to get a sample of it for months but without avail, its secret has been guarded too jealously.

"At last, however, we have triumphed so far that we have obtained the sample you see before you; but the difficult part is yet to come, for now it has to be examined and its composition discovered. That is the task I wish you to undertake, and had the abstraction of the explosive from the foreign laboratory been kept secret, it would not have been a very dangerous undertaking. Unfortunately, however, they discovered its loss at once. My agent had to run for his life, and only reached me after having been twice attacked on the way.

"At his suggestion I sent off this morning half-a-dozen trustworthy messengers to all our experts, with packets similar to this but containing no explosive, in the hope of putting any spies off the scent.

"It is quite likely, however, that you will be followed and watched—possibly attacked, so you quite realise the danger.

"The only way in which I can help you is to send a couple of Secret Service men to guard your house, and report anything suspicious to you while you are conducting your examination. I won't ask you whether you still agree to undertake the service, for I know what your answer will be; but I can assure you that you will

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be doing your country an invaluable service, which I shall take care to duly represent in the proper quarter. Now how long do you reckon it will be before you will be able to report to me?"

Farrell had listened with the keenest interest to Lord A——'s story, and no one looking at him could doubt whether he regretted the risk he had undertaken or not.

His tell-tale eyes were sparkling, and it was evident he looked upon his task with the greatest relish.

"Well, in the usual way it would take at least three days," he answered Lord A——; "but I intend to stick at it, without sleep, if possible, till it is finished.

"Much depends upon the material itself, of course, but I hope to have some definite result to lay before you by to-morrow evening."

Lord A—— was delighted; he had not reckoned on Farrell in vain.

"That's the sort of spirit I like," he said. "Now I will send for the men I promised you, and then I must leave you to untangle your skein alone."

The men proved to be two of the most efficient in the Service—shrewd, intelligent, and eager.

"Now; look here," said Farrell, "I suppose Lord A—— has told you all about this business, so I need not impress upon you the importance of carrying it through successfully.

"I shall take a cab from here to my laboratory and you had better follow me in another—keeping your eyes open meanwhile to see whether I am shadowed by anyone. Report to me when you arrive, and we will then take measures for the safety of the house while I am at work."

Farrell hailed a hansom outside the War Office and started for his laboratory.

He saw his two guards enter another cab about fifty yards in the rear, but though he purposely watched he did not see any other cab engaged before he turned out of Whitehall.

A motor-car suddenly turned, as it was passing, and dashed across the path of the cab.

He leant back lazily against the cushions with a look of relief on his face—the precious bag was on his knees—he would not trust it out of his hands, for he intended to run no unnecessary risks.

"And, after all," thought he, "what risk is there? the messengers that were dispatched this morning have probably put any pursuers off the track altogether, and I shall be allowed to pursue my investigations unhindered."

The more he thought of it, the more he was inclined to think that Lord A—— had magnified the danger.

"It is evident I am not followed," he thought, "or else I should have seen them engage a cab."

With this satisfying thought Farrell dismissed the danger from his mind, and settled himself to think out his line of investigation for arriving at the composition of the explosive.

He had succeeded in elaborating his scheme of analysis to his entire satisfaction and was soaring serenely in the clouds of his scientific imagination, when he was called back to earth with a rush by the violent swerving of his cab followed by the caustic and telling sarcasm of his driver.

"Garn, you bloomin' old tin ribs, why didn't yer say perlite as 'ow yer wanted to cut in 'atween my 'oss and keb?"

These words were addressed to the driver of a swift motor-car that had suddenly turned, as it was passing, and dashed across the path of the cab.

Had it not been for the ready presence of mind of Farrell's driver, the cab, Farrell saw, must inevitably have been wrecked.

The only passenger on the motor-car was a short, very broad, black-bearded individual, who was talking rapidly and excitedly to the driver, apparently urging upon him some course that was very much against his will.

As the car dashed across the front of the cab Farrell had noticed the eagerness with which this man had scanned him and his belongings and had seen with an uncomfortable start of surprise the look of fiendish delight that had flashed from his eyes as they fell upon the brown leather bag upon Farrell's knee.

With a shudder Farrell realised that this had been no accident, but a wilful attempt to wreck him. Somehow this man had discovered his secret and had even ventured to attack him in the busy streets of London in broad daylight.

What a narrow escape he had had, and he had been congratulating himself that he had no risks to run.

He had almost been caught napping; he must beware.

The motor-car disappeared round a corner ahead, but as the cab passed, Farrell could see it standing a little way down the road, evidently waiting to get behind the cab once again.

The two guards were still following him in their cab and they had evidently noticed the strange behaviour of the motor-car, for as he looked back they beckoned to him, and pointed

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frantically towards the road down which he had seen the motor-car standing.

What was he to do? Could he hope to dodge the motor-car and so keep the situation of his laboratory secret? Should he leave the cab at some corner? All sorts of plans crowded upon him at once, and the necessity for prompt decision was apparent.

All at once his face lighted up with a sudden thought.

"I wonder if I dare?" he said; then, as he further considered, he quickly decided, his face set sternly, and he muttered fiercely: "Yes, by Jove, and I'll do it, too. It's the only way."

Then aloud:

"Straight home, driver, as quickly as you can—only mind—no collisions, please."

* * * * *

The evening was closing by the time the laboratory was reached—for Farrell had not received Lord A——'s telegram until well on in the day.

The two Secret Service men entered the house about five minutes later and reported that the spy had dismissed the motor-car as soon as he had seen Farrell safely into the house, and had disappeared down one of the side streets.

"He will wait until it's dark," they said, "and will then try to enter the house."

"Do you think he will attempt to communicate with his friends?" Farrell asked.

Both the men assured Farrell that there was not the slightest fear of that.

"He is well-known to the secret service people, and has long been suspected of being in the pay of a foreign power.

"He is a desperate and dangerous man, and will try and play the game off his own bat, for success to him will mean almost certain fortune," they said.

"So much the better," said Farrell, "for he will fail, and it is safer to deal with one than a dozen."

"Now I must make all my arrangements and start on my examination, for as Lord A—— said: 'Every moment is precious.'

"If you will come with me I will show you what I want you to do."

The men saw that in Farrell they had a master mind, and wisely refrained from any futile questions or suggestions.

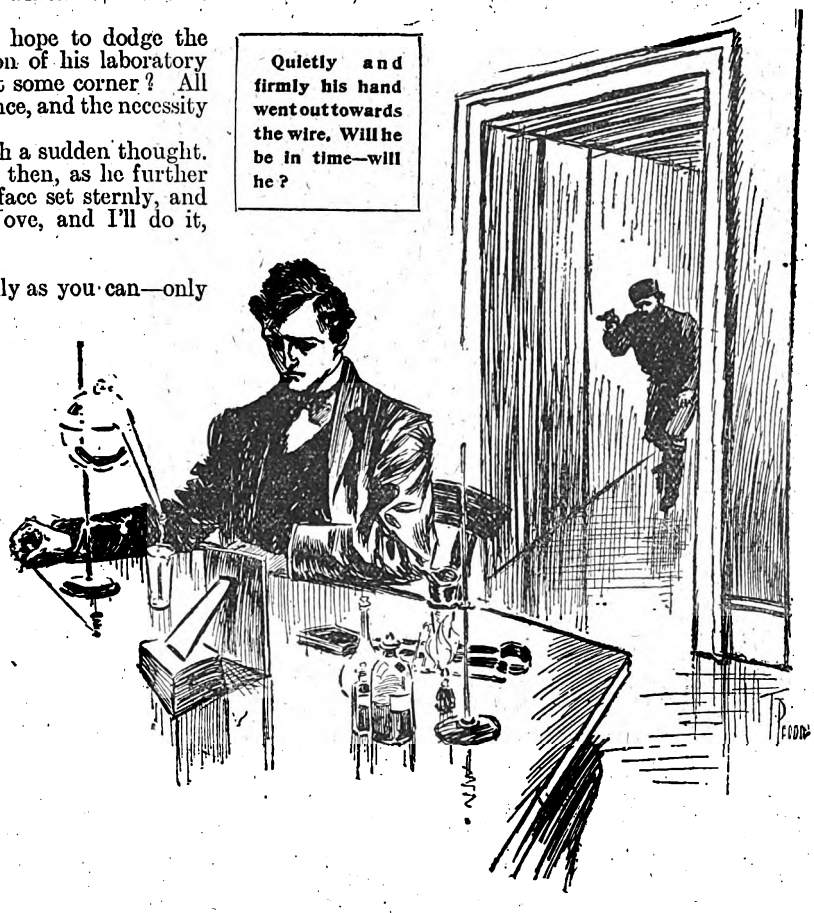
They had not been chosen for the Secret Service for nothing. They knew how to obey even if they wondered and knew not what their master had in view.

Farrell called his housekeeper, Mrs. Cook, and bade her carry some refreshments into the laboratory.

"Then you had better retire for the night, I think," said he, "for my friends and I have some important work on hand.

"Oh, and by-the-bye! do not be surprised or alarmed if you hear any very unusual sound, Mrs. Cook," added he, "for it is just possible our experiments may be noisy ones."

"All right, sir," the old housekeeper answered, and bustled away to fulfil his commands.



Quietly and firmly his hand went out towards the wire. Will he be in time—will he?

"Now we will go to the laboratory, if you please, and prepare to receive our friend the enemy."

So saying Farrell led the way to the stairs, at the foot of which he stopped again, and said to one of the men:

"You see that recess"—pointing to an opening about half-way down the hall—"I want you to conceal yourself there as completely as possible after we have made a beginning upstairs. Then you see that bell-push just at the side—it is connected to a bell in my laboratory for the convenience of Mrs. Cook; if you see or hear anyone ascend the stairs just press the button.

"I will take the bell off but will leave the indicator, so that I can be warned when the intruder is coming without letting him know that he is observed.

"Be very careful you do not let him hear you, or that will spoil all."

Then Farrell led the way to the laboratory. It was reached, after mounting the stairs, by a short corridor.

The laboratory stood parallel to the street and was separated from the house on every side, except where the corridor opened into it. The corridor ended with a double door arrangement forming a lobby, with a space of about four feet between door and door, for the prevention of draughts and the deadening of any noises that came from the house.

Edward Farrell had built his laboratory without stint

as to money, and had a good many fads of his own about the place.

Between the head of the stairs and the first door there was a switch or lever arrangement of some sort on the corridor wall that looked as though it was meant for a window opener. Farrell carefully shuttered all the windows and lit the gas. He then fetched a reel of fine wire and attached one end of the wire to the handle of this switch.

He then led the wire along the floor, through the lobby, and across the laboratory, to the side of the bench at which he intended to work, concealing it as he went as much as possible.

The bench was in a direct line with the corridor, and anyone approaching by that way could see whoever was working there quite plainly.

Farrell fetched a mirror and placed it on the bench in such a position that he could easily see down the corridor without having to look in that direction.

He next placed a large rose-spray syringe on a bench near the door and placed beside it a bottle and a beaker.

The bottle was labelled "chloroform."

The Secret Service men, who had up to then been watching and assisting as much as possible without making any comment, could not help exchanging questioning glances with each other.

What did Farrell mean to do? Surely he did not expect that a desperate man like their pursuer would allow himself to be calmly smothered with chloroform.

Farrell's manner, however, forbade questioning, and there was somehow a look of power about him that told the men that his plan was much deeper than that.

"Now," said Farrell, "I think our arrangements are about complete; we dare not waste any more time—for it is quite half-an-hour since we entered, and he may force an entry at any moment.

"We will keep all our lights going just as usual, for it will perhaps lead him to think he was not noticed, and so give him greater confidence to enter. We cannot feel safe till he is disposed of one way or the other—so the quicker we get it over the better.

"Just take a few of these refreshments, and then you"—indicating the man he had instructed at the foot of the stairs—"had better conceal yourself at your post, and wait for developments. It is now ten o'clock. He may enter at any minute, or, on the other hand, you may have to wait for hours, but you must keep a strict silence and a sharp watch, for much depends on your warning."

Then to the other man:

"You had better sit down in that corner where you cannot be seen from the corridor. Do not speak a word or make a sound, I want him to think I am quite alone."

These were strange instructions for the capture of a dangerous spy, but the men obeyed without a word, and Farrell settled himself to the task before him. Both the doors leading to the stairs were left wide open so that one could see from end to end of the corridor.

Farrell locked most of his precious explosive stuff up in his safe, leaving out only as much as he needed for his immediate purpose. First he worked at his balance, weighing off portions of the explosive, then at his bench with his beakers and chemicals, but always keeping his eye on the indicator connected with the bell-push in the hall below.

The time crept slowly by. It must have been quite an hour since Farrell had dismissed the men to their posts.

The man in the laboratory sat as though carved in stone. Not a sound came from the other part of the building to tell that any living creature was there.

Still the indicator was blank, still no sound came from any part of the house.

Had Farrell reckoned in vain? Was the spy going to leave him in peace after all? He almost hoped it might be so; and yet he knew that the secret at stake was far too great for that.

He settled himself as best he could to his task again; and, considering the strain upon him, apart from his work, progressed better than he had dared to hope.

Suddenly the indicator on the opposite wall gave a low click, and Farrell saw that the little disc had fallen.

Farrell still went on with his work as though nothing had happened, but his eyes were constantly searching the mirror to see if anyone was creeping along the corridor.

For a full minute after the warning had been given the corridor was deserted, then, at the further end, a head slowly appeared round the corner by the stairs.

Gradually the whole body made its appearance and someone commenced to slowly creep along by the side of the wall.

Farrell saw that it was the same short, black-bearded man that had been in the motor-car earlier in the evening.

In his right hand he carried a weapon of some sort.

It was certain he could see Farrell, and evidently thought him alone.

As he crept slowly on in the dim half-light of the corridor his great fear must have been that Farrell should turn and discover him.

Farrell, however, still kept on with his examination. His nerves were strained to the utmost, for he could see his foe creeping gradually nearer, and yet he dared not show that he knew it.

Nearer and nearer yet he crept. Farrell could see by the mirror that he had reached the first doorway.

Nearer still—he passed the doorway—and crouched in the space that formed the lobby; he raised his arm slowly and noiselessly, and Farrell saw that the weapon he carried was a revolver.

Now was the moment ripe for action; now he would put his plan to the test, yet he must be quick for the revolver already covered him—another step forward and it would be too late!

Quietly and firmly his hand went out toward the wire. Will he be in time—will he?

Thank Heaven, yes! A sharp, short tug, followed by a crash, and two heavy iron slides fell, one before and one behind the astonished victim.

The slides formed part of an arrangement he had fitted up for securely shutting off his laboratory from the house in case of fire and was worked like a portcullis. The whole arrangement could be liberated at a moment's notice by the lever in the corridor.

The slides were arranged with an air space between them to more effectually prevent the progress of any conflagration, and ran up and down in special grooves placed just inside each of the ordinary doors of the lobby.

Cries and shrieks of rage, oaths and curses galore came from the little space between the iron doors.

The Secret Service man jumped up from his chair and rushed forward—the whole scheme was plain to him now; he marvelled at its simplicity and its cunning effectiveness.

Farrell rushed to the chloroform, poured out about half-a-pint of it into the beaker and filled the syringe.

Then he quickly mounted a chair by the slide, opened

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a small ventilating hole at the top, poured the whole contents of his syringe upon the raving man beneath, and quickly shut the opening again.

It must have drenched the poor wretch for his fury was redoubled for a moment or two and he kicked the door in a wild madness of rage.

Soon the anaesthetic began to tell upon him, however, his cries became feebler, and at last, ceased altogether.

Farrell then directed the Secret Service man to cautiously raise the iron doors again by turning a crank at the side of the room.

As the slides gradually lifted the unfortunate spy could be seen lying senseless on the floor—a revolver still firmly grasped in his right hand, and his clothes soaked in chloroform.

They soon had him out, and—with the help of the other Secret Service man, who had been summoned from his station downstairs—bound him securely.

"Take that fellow downstairs into the kitchen," said Farrell. "You had better take it in turns to guard him until I have finished my investigation and reported to Lord A——, then we can decide what to do with him."

* * * * *

Farrell's report was eminently satisfactory, and revealed to Lord A—— and his expert advisers the key to the secret of the foreign explosive.

Lord A— was greatly pleased by the way the spy had been tricked, and insisted upon his being handed over to the tender mercies of the War Department.

Edward Farrell's services received recognition from high quarters, and he had no reason to complain of the lack of gratitude on the part of His Majesty's Government.

[Next Week: THE HIDDEN MESSAGE.]

AT HER OWN VALUATION.

"You see how exquisitely it fits, madam?"

"I see that the young lady's figure is perfect," Mrs. Alsteyn replied dryly.

Grace Williams moved up and down in front of the long mirror that the great lady might get a better effect of the garment she contemplated buying.

The compliment had not brought the faintest shade of colour to the beautiful rounded cheek. Compliments were an hourly occurrence in the life of Grace Williams, cloak model. They filled her with a slow, consuming anger that turned her life into gall and wormwood.

Why should these women who came to buy cloaks of Brown & Buxton feel at liberty to make personal comments on her appearance every hour of the day. She was there to try on cloaks, not as a target for their personalities.

She slipped the Persian lamb and sable garment from her shoulders and stood waiting for her orders to tempt the next customer. Her black satin frock, cut in the princess style, was an additional offence. Why should she be obliged to wear this hateful livery in her working hours when the only gown that her leisure hours afforded was a wretched black serge.

The tears that filled her eyes turned the electric light into dissolving rainbows that burnt and blurred the cloak department till she could see nothing.

"You won't sell many cloaks if you look like that." The voice was cheerful, even sympathetic.

"Poor girl, what's the matter, have those girls been teasing you because you're the best-looking girl in the shop? It's a shame!"

She struggled desperately to pull herself together.

"No, indeed, Mr. Brown, everyone is just as kind to me as can be. I don't know why I was so foolish."

The young proprietor looked at her kindly. "The trouble with you is, that you don't have any amusement in your life, poor girl, nothing but prance and preen in front of a mirror all day long, trying on warm coats in a warm room, and then after your day's work is done, get into a thin jacket and face the blast."

"I was thinking something of that sort when you caught me—just now."

"How would you like to go to a theatre to-night and then have a little supper afterwards?"

The girl raised a pair of frightened eyes to his. That the "young boss" as he was familiarly called, should ask any of the girls to supper was an unheard-of thing.

"I thank you, but——"

"You think it would make talk?"

"I know it."

"Confound it, Miss Williams, why should it make talk? I am a decent enough fellow, with no scandals clinging to my coat-tails; why shouldn't I take you to the theatre? The mere fact that you happen to earn your living in my shop has nothing to do with the matter."

The offer was very tempting. Grace was so tired of going home to the cold bedroom night after night—the theatre, supper afterwards, with the "young boss"—think of it—the other girls would be mad with jealousy next day—but could she stand the gossip?—surely she owed something to herself, to her honest name.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Brown, but it would not be fair to either of us. You are good enough to take me out just because you see that I need a little amusement. It would be a poor way to repay your kindness by getting you talked about."

He flushed a little and looked embarrassed. "I had not thought about it exactly in that light."

Then Miss Williams was called to try on a white ermine opera cloak. The young proprietor watched her as she walked back and forth in front of the mirror. "Oh, what a life for such a girl!" He went back to his private office, neglected all his affairs for the remainder of the afternoon and called himself names.

The gong for closing had struck, the army of *employés* were filing out. In the throng was Grace Williams, her light summer jacket buttoned up tightly about her throat. A shabby serge skirt had replaced her satin livery. She carried herself like an empress.

She followed the throng for several streets, then struck off into a side street. She mounted the steps of a shabby boarding-house. Someone was playing on a crazy piano in the dining-room and the odour of boiled cabbage rushed out to greet the weary bread-winner.

How silly she had been. Why had she not accepted his invitation.

"Miss Williams—Grace—do wait a moment." It was the young boss.

"Grace, I want you to take me at your own valuation. It's better than I deserve. Come to the theatre with me to-night as my promised wife?"

She put her little, cold, bare hand in his.

"Thank you!" was all she said. W. E. York.

STATUE or WOMAN?

Two Loves that were Lost.

YIELDING to the pressure of my friend, George Harland, I consented at last to accompany him to the home of his grandmother in Lanstone, where I had been many times invited. When we descended from the train at the station we found the old lady seated in the carriage which had come to convey us and our luggage, and beside her two young ladies, who were presented to me as:

"Miss Agnes Thomson."

"Miss Jessie Gerton."

The first, a blonde, pink and white, and very pretty, seemed the expression of gladness. Her red lips smiled, her blue eyes sparkled, and the soft little ring of hair which lay about her face blew in the wind with a sort of merriment that fitted her exactly. She was lovely, but her companion made a more striking impression on me.

Tall, slender, self-possessed, she seemed to carry a sort of majesty in her presence. Her hair and eyebrows were of an intense blackness, which heightened the delicate, though perfectly healthy, whiteness of her skin. Her features were beautiful in their regularity, and the whole face breathed a calmness which contrasted greatly with the vivacity of the girl beside her. Her eyes, of a beautiful brown, were half-hidden under long, heavily-fringed lids, which were of the same pure white as her face. As her companion seemed the spirit of gaiety, she expressed the very essence of repose.

The two girls, after having responded to my bow, turned to welcome George. Agnes, with the most perfect frankness, expressed her delight at seeing him, and shook hands vigorously; Jessie bestowed on him her hand, and, without a smile, and in the most musical voice I had ever heard, spoke a few words of conventional welcome.

When we reached the house and I found myself alone with my friend. As we changed our clothes for dinner, I asked him about the two girls.

"Agnes and Jessie have been orphans from infancy. Agnes was the child of one of my grandmother's friends, and Jessie is her grandniece and a distant cousin of mine. What do you think of Agnes?" he asked, a trifle anxiously.

"She is attractive, indeed!" I answered.

"I wanted to wait until you had seen her before telling you that I am head over ears in love with her. I mean to marry her if she will only have me."

"She is very pretty, but I must confess that the other attracted me more. I think I have fallen in love with Jessie, if it is possible to do so in twenty minutes."

George shrugged his shoulders.

"Jessie is beautiful, it is true," he said, "and possesses all the virtues on the calendar, but she is not a woman—she is a statue."

"A statue!" I repeated.

"Yes, that is what I have always called her. She is insensibility itself; she feels nothing, cares for nothing, nothing affects her cold nature. She is made of marble, and made perfectly, but she is not flesh and blood."

"Some one will breathe life into the marble some day and she will come to life," I answered.

"I doubt it," said George. "She is incapable of feeling any kind of sentiment, sorrow, joy, or love. Why, you might as well try to move a stone to pity! As far back as I can remember she has never expressed even a preference for anything. If I have asked her what we should do she has always answered, 'As you please. It makes no difference to me!' That is her whole disposition in a phrase!"

I felt that George was doing her an injustice, for in my short interview I had felt a strange sympathy with her and I knew that under that beautiful calmness lay a mine of undiscovered treasure. Oh, that my hand might be the one to bring it to the light!

As in all our rides and walks George so managed as to be the companion of Agnes, I was thrown constantly with Jessie.

She was a delightful companion so long as the conversation was of a conventional and impersonal turn, but try as I would, I could not pierce her calm; I could not know her true self. She was closed to me, her thoughts a sealed book, and I grew discouraged before her obstinate coldness.

By this time my own heart had become so involved that I could not give up trying to betray her into self-revelation. I loved her as she was—statue or woman. I watched her always, hoping always for some key to her enigmatical soul.

At last, in the most unexpected way, I found it.

One night at dinner George was telling some personal experiences with the charming manner of a good story-teller. My look left him and fell on Jessie, and I could scarcely refrain from an exclamation of surprise. Her eyes, which were usually half-hidden, were opened wide and fixed on her cousin; her cheeks glowed with a soft pink; her whole expression was one of unconscious animation that made her ten times more lovely.

I studied her face attentively. What a soft light burnt in those beautiful eyes as they gazed at George!

Suddenly Jessie turned her head as though feeling my scrutiny and our eyes met. In an instant the colour faded from her cheeks, the light in her eyes was veiled and she had become the statue again.

But I had had a glimpse of what I knew was hidden. The statue possessed flesh, blood and sentiment. I knew it now and the vision did not give me the happiness I had expected.

That evening I watched her more closely than ever. She had taken up a piece of embroidery and sat under the lamp, sewing, her hair shining in the light. George and Agnes drew softly to the long window and disappeared into the garden. The grandmother saw them, and laughed:

"There they are, running away again; those foolish children!" she said.

Jessie's head was bent so low over her work I could

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not see her face, but I saw her hands tremble so that she had to stop sewing until she regained control of them.

A statue! A fragile one, then. And George had said she could not suffer!

The grandmother retired to her room shortly, and I followed, sick at heart. Five minutes later I discovered that I had left my paper, and I returned to the salon.

Jessie was still under the lamp, but she was not sewing. Her embroidery had fallen to the floor and her head was bowed on her arms upon the table. Her shoulders were shaken by sobs.

An immense pity filled me for this woman whose sorrow had revealed her to me. I crossed the room and stood beside her. As soon as she heard me she jumped up, and would have left the room, but I said:

"Jessie, don't run away. You need not be afraid, for I have guessed everything."

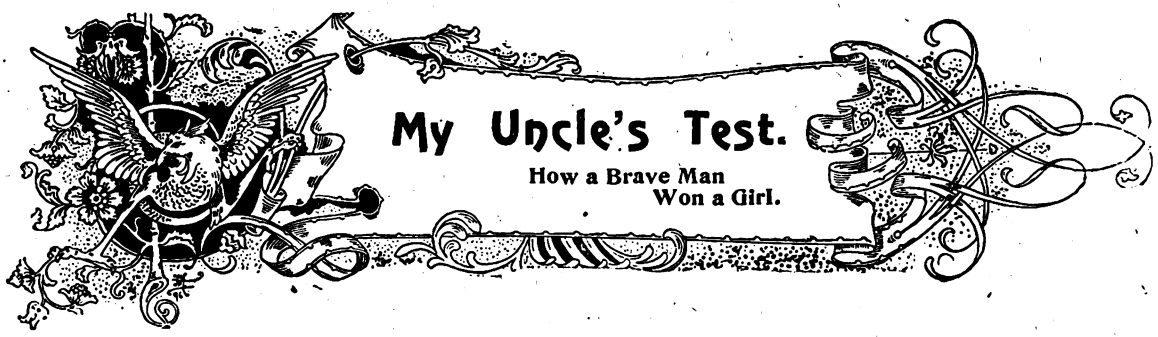
She looked at me, her beautiful mouth trembling, her eyes wet, her cheeks flushed, and all her reserve broke down.

"No, you could not guess how much I love him," she said. "Ever since we were children together I have worshipped him and feared him. Now I love him with a love so strong and deep it merges everything else, and he does not suspect it. I know he calls me a statue and thinks I'm hard and cold. If I were not that way I should throw myself at his feet."

She was vibrating with emotion, making a picture so beautiful that my eyes were dazzled. And with what despair I saw her come into life!

"You will not betray me," she said, a great pleading in her voice and face. "He is going to marry Agnes, and they must never know. But I shall never love any one but him."

I took the hand she held out me, and promised to keep her secret—and my own T. H. French.



When the dry voice of the little lawyer died away we three beneficiaries by the will stood amazed, astounded at its peculiar provisions.

My cousin, George Vardon, was the first to break the silence. "The man must have been mad," he exclaimed.

"It is such a strange will. If I understand it, his immense property is cut into halves, of which my cousin, Nora, receives one part and the other is to be divided between Mr. Harold Waring and myself," continued George Vardon.

"Quite right," assented the lawyer.

"But in the event of the death of Miss Nora Waring within one hour of the reading of this testament, the entire property is to go to found an orphan asylum; not only her portion but ours as well. In the event of the death of either Mr. Harold Waring or myself within the same time his portion is to be added to the share of Nora, and is to become hers. In case all three survive the hour, the property willed to us becomes ours unconditionally. Am I right?"

"Right again, Mr. Vardon," answered Mr. Brief, the lawyer.

"But why this absurd provision about our sudden death within the hour? I assure you"—with a nervous little laugh—"I have no immediate intention of giving up the ghost, Miss Nora looks superbly healthy, and Mr. Harold Waring is at least not an invalid."

"I can't explain the will at all. The old gentleman had queer fancies, gathered during his long sojourn in India. But you may depend upon it that he was quite sane and that the testament is absolutely valid. I drew it up myself, and there is no possible flaw in it. Let me call your attention again to another peculiar provision of the will. You three are to go at once into the blue room, close the door, and remain there fifteen minutes. You will find upon the floor a carved box, which one of you is to open. It may possibly be that in that box there may be some explanation of the terms of the will. I have the honour to wish you a very good day and long life to enjoy your property." With which Mr. Brief bowed himself out of the room.

My uncle had amassed a large property in India, where he had led a very curious life, being familiar with a very mixed company of natives and whites. His confidential valet, Lal Singh, was a man of such varied accomplishments that I never found him looking at me without feeling the creeps shiver down my back.

I, Nora Waring, was the favourite of the three kinsfolk who were left my uncle upon his return to England. He was absurdly fond of me, and in a continual fear lest I should make an unhappy marriage to some man unworthy of me. As to his nephews, who were also my cousins, I had never been able to find out whether he liked them or not. Often I had observed him looking curiously at them, and then anxiously at me, for my cousins were patiently, if not yet confessedly, admirers of mine. He was always quite civil to them both and very generous in his gifts to them, but what his secret feelings were I had never fathomed. Sometimes it had seemed to me that I had seen him chuckle when he looked at the sedate, careful George Vardon or the reckless, don't-care Harold Waring, much as if he had some surprises arranged for them in the future.

I do not know what curious fancies passed through the minds of my cousins as the automatic lock of the blue room clicked behind us, but I confess that for my part I was ready to conceive all manner of Borgia de-

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vices. From the puzzled, strained look on the handsome face of George, I knew he was worrying over the situation. As for Harold Waring, he strode in with his usual easy, debonair cavalry swing, looking every inch the soldier and gentleman. I glanced swiftly from one to the other, and for the life of me I could not tell which I liked the better. Before I left the blue room fifteen minutes later I knew which I loved and which I despised.

The room was bare of all furniture, save a roll-top desk and a small table in one corner, on the top of each of which lay a cane walking-stick. The carved box mentioned in the will stood on the floor in an opposite corner.

"Let Nora open the box. It will be something for her to remember when we laugh about it in the future," suggested George.

We walked over together to the box, and I was about to turn the key when Harold Waring thrust me roughly to one side, struck by some sudden impulse of danger.

"No, no, Nora! Let me," he cried, and quickly turned the key.

The lid rose from the box before he had time to touch it, and from beneath it slid out half-a-dozen horrible flat heads and sinuous necks. I shrieked aloud in terror, and fled screaming across the room to the door. But the walls flung back my cries, and the door seemed to mock my efforts to wrench it open. I was in a palsy of agony, expecting every moment to feel the dreadful clutch of death fasten on me.

"Courage, Nora, courage! We'll win through yet, little cousin," cried a tremulous voice in my ear.

The strong arm of Harold Waring was wrapped about my waist, and I felt myself propelled towards the table. He lifted me from the ground and leapt across a reptile which barred the way. George Vardon was already cowering on the table, beside himself with terror, all manhood gone. His face was ashen grey, and his limbs shook beneath him.

"Keep back!" he cried. "There is no room for more, and I got here first. Keep back, I say!"

He seized the cane which lay on the table and struck wildly at us. Harold warded it aside and lifted me to the table.

"There's room for two," he said. "And if there were room for only one, that one should be Nora, you coward.'

"Jump, Harold!" I cried. "Jump, quick."

He leapt aside just in time to avoid the spring of the cobra. He circled round the room, jumping from side to side in his efforts to avoid the horrible death which menaced him. My heart stood still. It seemed to me that the room was filled with those ghastly erect, quivering bodies, with hooded heads, from which shot forked tongues of death, with unnatural, distended necks. I knew now who the man was that I loved, and I covered my face with my hands that I might not see him stricken down before my eyes. But the awful fascination of it was greater than my will. I had to look again. The face of Harold Waring was covered with beady perspiration, and in his eyes lurked gruesome fear.

"The cane!" he gasped, as he passed the table.

But George Vardon clung to it despairingly, imploring Waring to save him at any price, for Heaven's sake to save him.

"Oh, you coward," I flung at him. Then, with a sudden inspiration:

"The cane on the desk, Harold," I cried to him.

He reached the desk in safety, grasped the cane, and as he touched the roll-top it swung back. From the desk two more cobras slid with a dull thud to the ground. Harold Waring made his way to a corner of the room, and made a last stand with his back to the wall like a British officer.

Again and again he beat back the venomous reptiles with swift cuts of the cane, or trampled upon them with his heavy boot-heels. But the end was near, and I knew it.

I could stand it no longer. Snatching the cane from the palsied hands of George Vardon, I leapt to the ground and made across the room. I heard a curious whistle, and instantly every reptile was still. The whistle was repeated and they began to crawl towards the box whence they had come.

A panel slid aside in the wall, and Lal Singh stood smiling in the opening. He looked from one to another of us with a curious light of understanding in his eyes, as if he appreciated perfectly the part that each had played in the scene just finished. Then he came forward with his usual obsequious bow and handed me a letter.

I took it, swayed uncertainly for a moment, and pitched forward in a faint. When I came to myself Harold was bending over me with a face like chalk. Lal Singh and George Vardon stood back a little way, the one still smiling, the other with twitching limbs.

I tore open the letter and read it. The signature at the bottom was my dead uncle's.

> "Dear Nora,—There can come to a woman no greater misery than to marry the wrong man. She had better be in her grave than find that the man she has promised to love and honour is selfish and a coward. From long experience I know that it would be useless for me to tell you which of your cousins is a man and which is not, so I have arranged a little test for you to judge them by. It is at the supreme moments that there appears the difference between the coward and the brave man. For that reason I have brought you and them face to face with such a moment. If the strain has been a hard one, remember that it has been only on account of the great love I bear you, and forgive
>
> "James Waring."

I handed the letter to Harold Waring, and he read it aloud. George Vardon shrank back in shame, his breath coming in laboured gasps.

When he had finished reading my soldier cousin faced me, standing very erect, but with a countenance from which all the colour of blood had fled.

"And this—'little test'—has it availed, Nora?" he asked.

There was something in his manner that forbade me to trifle with him. "You will have but a short courtship, and a long sad mourning, Nora, for—I think I am about to die, sweetheart. I was bitten three times, and the bite of the cobra is—fatal," he told me sadly. Then, smiling a little: "You see one of us is to die within the hour after all."

"No so, sahib," interposed the soft voice of Lal Singh. "The fangs of the cobras had all been removed."

William McLeod Raine.

THE GREAT NEW SERIAL,

"LINK BY LINK,"

Starts Next Week.

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THE newspaper boys and the crossing-sweepers were unanimously of opinion that Dixon was a millionaire. They never said so to his face, of course, but they touched their hats when he came in sight, and they knew that when he gave them a penny for a halfpenny paper he would never wait for the change. Whenever he did a thing he always did it in style.

He was not exactly a millionaire, but considering the small salaries they give in the City nowadays, it is wonderful how well the junior clerks manage to dress on £25 a year. It must be remembered, moreover, that this young man was wealthier by a small farm and £500 in the bank than most of the clerks who belonged to the firm of Morris Weight and Co. Otherwise, so far as character and ability went, he was much the same as the other young men in the establishment. Theoretically speaking he should have been proportionately happier than they. Doubtless he would have been, but for a certain unfortunate peculiarity of temperament. He fell in love too easily.

Whenever Dixon found himself sufficiently interested in a girl to ask for her photograph, he immediately lost all interest in other girls, and became at once irresistibly tender, jealous, and generally foolish. He got into trouble in this way. It used to happen very often, and each time it was the most violent attack of the disease which he had ever known.

About every other week he used to fall in love with a new girl. Then he forgot his studied languor, and ran over muddy crossings when the cause of his malady approached. He practised graceful bows before the mirror, yet when she, to whom all these bows were made in imagination, stood before him, he would do nothing but speak of the pleasant weather, which was rather inappropriate when, as is usually the case in England, the sun had not seen the ground for a week.

It was at the theatre that he first met Laura Mann. Just as the maid, who was dusting furniture on the stage cried, "Here he comes at last," and flung herself quickly round, accidentally revealing a glimpse of black stockings and snowy lace with perfect success, some one asked him if he would mind moving his legs, and he looked up to see a pompous old lady, followed by the prettiest girl he had ever seen.

The seats next to him were vacant, and to his intense delight the ladies immediately proceeded to occupy them. The lively little housemaid with the black stockings no longer interested him, and his whole attention was devoted to his next-door neighbour. Once or twice he caught her looking at him out of the corners of her eyes, which were, of course, modestly dropped directly he met her gaze.

Towards the end of the second act the old lady most conveniently fainted, and Dixon after this could not very well do otherwise than volunteer to escort them home.

The following Sunday evening he called by permission, at their house in Brixton. He sang to Miss Angelina Norton's accompaniment, to the admiration of the fat old lady, whom he already regarded as his future mother-in-law. She would not have admired him, perhaps, if it had not been that she was deaf with one ear, and always sat with that ear towards the piano when Angelina's young men came in to sing.

A week later, and the little drawing-room had already begun to feel quite homelike. He was perfectly at his ease by this time, and talked as if he had been a friend of the family for at least ten years. He alluded to his country estates and to his banking account in a casual sort of way and with a shrug of his shoulders which might mean anything, and then he went away with the comfortable belief that he was making a good impression.

The following Wednesday he had three tickets given him for the dress circle of the Gaiety. He thereupon wrote to Beaumont, Mortice Avenue, Brixton, and said he was going to try and get some tickets for the theatre that night, and would they care to come with him. They understood from what he said afterwards that he had paid at least three times the ordinary amount for those seats, as there was a great run on the tickets.

On the way home he was quite sure that Miss Angelina leant up against him in the 'bus. He didn't say anything at the time, but in the hall, when the old lady had gone on ahead, she made a little exclamation, and said he mustn't think of such a thing, but he did—he kissed her.

And he went down into the street with feelings of exultation, doubt, and helplessness well-mixed and shaken together.

He was not quite sure that this kiss had not been a little premature. It was very nice, of course; but somehow or other he thought a good deal about his indiscretion, and recalled several little speeches of Angelina's, which irritated him, and made him regret that he had gone so far.

On Sunday he called again. He was reserved, almost

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cold, during the first part of the evening; but later, when they sat on the sofa together for the first time, his reserve wore away.

On all his subsequent visits they sat on the sofa.

* * * * *

The clerks in the office of Messrs. Morris, Weight and Co. were taking their holidays by turns, and early in September Dixon packed up his Gladstone bag and went down to Margate.

He found society down there very pleasant, and he had hardly been away five days before the young lady who sang on the pier usurped the place in his heart which once had been sacred to Angelina. That pretty creature's charms became dim when regarded from a distance, and although he had told her the night before he went away that Margate would be unendurable for more than a week without her; he now secretly determined to stay down there a fortnight at least. He passed a restless night, making up his mind on the subject, and he awoke with a headache. He rang the bell, and sent the waiter for a brandy and soda. He was a very abstemious youth, and it may have been that this unusual dissipation went to his head. At all events, by the time he was dressed he had fully made up his mind that he couldn't marry that shallow, ignorant girl for all the wealth of the world.

Fickle? Yes, he knew he was fickle. But it was better to draw back now, better for her—better for him, especially for him. He had never known what love was until he had seen the young lady who sang on the pier. He felt that it would be kinder to let Angelina know the truth at once. They were not suited to one another. If he did not break the engagement off, it would only lead to everlasting regrets.

On second thoughts, however, he thought that he would let the matter taper off gradually. So he made his second letter to Brixton, say, about a third as warm as the first, and said casually that he had decided to stay at Margate for the whole of the holiday.

In her reply Angelina said she did not know what she had done that he should throw her over in that disgraceful way. She supposed that he had found people down there who were more to his taste than his homely Brixton friends.

Dixon felt, as he read this letter through for the second time, that the tapering process was going to be rather abrupt. He ordered another brandy and soda and then sat down and wrote a reply at once.

He referred to the danger of making mistakes. He did not think that any man was justified in marrying a girl unless she was willing to trust him as she would trust herself; unless he was absolutely certain that he was in a position to make her happy. Both for her sake and his, but especially for hers, he thought that they had better come to a distinct understanding. It would be far wiser to deliberate calmly and carefully before taking a step which they could never recall, and might afterwards regret. There could be, he said, nothing more terrible than a life-long union of two uncongenial souls, and he begged to remain, hers faithfully, Harold Dixon.

Miss Norton's reply was brief. She saw exactly what he had in his mind, and she had placed the matter in the hands of her solicitors.

"That young woman's driving me to drink," said Dixon, as he ordered the third brandy and soda he had absolutely needed since he had been down at Margate. There was no mistaking the meaning of the letter. She was going to bring an action for breach of promise. Once more certain traits in Angelina's character recurred to him. There was no question about it—he was certain.

Yes, he reflected, she is just the girl to do it. He thought of the notoriety, of the public disgrace, the ridicule, the expense, and, as a last straw, his instant dismissal from the firm of Morris, Weight, and Co.

He had long desired to visit Ireland, and he suddenly came to the conclusion that there is no time like the present. He would go over there and stay long enough for this nonsense to blow over.

He wasn't going to pay £1,000 to a girl like Angelina, especially as he only had £500, and he immediately drew that £500 from the bank, and took the very next boat across the Irish Channel. When he arrived at Dublin, after a very rough crossing, he suddenly came to the conclusion that he would stay there permanently.

After that experience nothing would induce him to go back. This was his idea.

The next evening he was sitting in the smoking-room of a quiet commercial hotel in Dublin. It seemed to him he might well congratulate himself on having given An ina the slip, and he laughed softly to himself at the thought of the distracted solicitor arriving at Margate and finding the bird had flown.

He was still laughing when the waiter opened the door and brought in a letter addressed to him in an unknown hand. It bore the London postmark.

"Well, that's very strange," he thought to himself, as he weighed the envelope on the tip of his finger. "How in the world have they got my address? I suppose Morris and Weight's manager told them. I wish I had never met him at the station now. But I thought he could be trusted, and it seemed just as well to have someone who knows where you are. I wonder who this is from."

He tore open the letter and glanced hurriedly through it, and then he started up, with his hand pressed to his forehead.

It was from a firm of London solicitors who wrote on behalf of their client, Miss Angelina Norton, to say that the damage done to the lady's affections was estimated at £1,500. They confidently believed that Mr. Dixon could not fail to see the justice of their client's demand, and expressed a hope that he would be good enough to settle the matter without the formality of submitting the case to a jury.

"There's only one thing to do," thought Dixon, as he leant his elbow on the mantelpiece; "I must take the next train to Queenstown, and continue my travels to America. I have always had a great wish to go there. And I feel I want change of air."

The shock this letter had been to Dixon was sufficient to create a demand for brandy and soda. The waiter brought in the spirit in a tumbler and a syphon. Dixon mixed the two with very little of the syphon. Then he asked for a time-table, and discovered that the midnight train was the first that he could catch.

"I may as well stop here for dinner," he thought. Then he went upstairs and packed his bag. Having done so, it occurred to him that there were one or two things in the town it might be as well to get off his mind, and he went out and bought a tooth-brush, a sponge-bag, and a few other little articles which he had forgotten in his sudden flight from Margate.

It was eight o'clock as he once more reached the hotel, and he went at once into the dining-room. His appetite had sadly diminished since the receipt of that letter, and whenever the door opened he started nervously. He wished he was safely on his way to America, or that he had never quarrelled with Angelina. He did not much

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care which; but his situation in Dublin was embarrassing. At ten o'clock the passengers from the afternoon boat arrived.

The landlord bustled about shouting directions to the waiters, hanging up overcoats, and welcoming his old friends among the commercial travellers.

"Supper is ready, gentlemen," he called out in his cheery voice, and they all trooped out of the hall into the coffee-room.

All except one. He was a little man, small and thin, with a red moustache, and sandy hair of a peculiarly sickly shade. His eyes were hidden beneath immense eyebrows, and his shoulders were stooped forward.

"Do you know what time the train to Queenstown goes?" he said, holding out his hand to the fire, and addressing himself to Dixon.

Dixon was sitting with the fatal letter on his lap, rolling a cigar in his mouth. He was in no mood for conversation, and he was quite unconscious of the stare he fixed upon his interlocutor, who was rubbing his hands nervously.

"At midnight," he said shortly.

The little man seemed disquieted by Dixon's steady stare, and he shifted from one leg to the other. He dropped his eyes, and they fell upon the envelope which Dixon had allowed to fall to the ground. He started when he saw it and changed colour. Then he seated himself in a chair, placing his little black bag between his feet, as if he were frightened of forgetting it, while he cast frequent glances at Dixon from under his shaggy eyebrows.

"I wonder what the dickens that fellow's staring at me for," thought Dixon, when at last he became conscious of the fact that every movement was being watched by the weird specimen of humanity in the opposite chair. He felt nervous and irritated, but for some time his thoughts were too busy with his plans for escape even to ask himself why.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright in his chair.

A cold shiver ran down his back and seemed to settle in the calves of his legs, leaving them clammy and moist.

"By Jove," he thought, "that man's a detective."

When he came to look at it there was no mistaking that flimsy disguise. The moustache did not always move in exact time with the upper lip, and the whiskers shifted with the man's ears, and not with his jaws.

At that moment the landlord returned from the coffee-room, and Dixon turned to him as to an old friend. He felt safer in the presence of a third party.

"Won't you have any supper, sir?" said mine host, with a bow towards the stranger.

The little man passed the back of his hand nervously across his mouth.

"No thank you," he said, keeping his eyes fixed on Dixon. "I'll stop here, if you don't mind. It's not winter yet, I know, but I'm glad you've got a fire," and he shivered.

Dixon thought he would try a bit of bluff. "Make out my bill," he ejaculated, turning to the proprietor, "I shall be going on early to-morrow."

Mine host turned towards his desk, and as he did so he stooped down leisurely and picked up an evening paper which one of the travellers had dropped.

"Hullo," he said, "another bank cashier gone wrong. Got away with his money, too."

"What's that?" said the little shrivelled-up man, looking up quickly.

The proprietor finished up the paragraph before he answered.

"Head cashier of the Anglo-American Joint Stock Company," he replied. "Gone off with £50,000 and the detectives can't trace him. They never can," and he laughed softly to himself as a man who has a notion he could do the work of the Scotland Yard officials a good deal better than they seem to.

"Can't they?" said Dixon. He was thinking of his own case, and he carefully avoided looking in the direction of the little man opposite, lest he should see a malicious gleam of triumph.

"Do you think he won't get away, then?" queried the stranger, and the leather of his chair creaked as he bent forward.

"I'm certain of it," said Dixon. "The law never yet failed to ferret out a runaway."

He was still thinking of his own case and he groaned inwardly. The little man opposite groaned too, only it was audible in his case, and involuntary.

Dixon looked up suddenly.

"That man's a good actor," he thought to himself. "If I didn't know about these things I should never have guessed he was a detective. It was an unnecessary expense sending him over here, but I suppose they guessed I should go on to America when I got as far as this. I hope he won't arrest me publicly. I think I'd better let him see I am going back like a man. So," he added aloud, "the letter got here before you, eh?"

He was looking at the stranger. The little man fidgeted uneasily, and the leather of his chair creaked again.

"I'd like a word with you in a private room, sir," he said, with a meaning glance.

Dixon nodded. He was grateful to the man for his thoughtfulness. Certainly mine host suspected nothing.

In another moment the proprietor had shown them into a private sitting-room. There was a good deal of dust on the chairs, and the whole apartment wore a gloomy and uninhabited aspect.

Both men shivered.

They drew up two chairs to the table, and the little man laid his bag down in front of him.

"Well," said Dixon, "I was about right when I said it was impossible for a man to get out of the reach of the law, eh?" and he laughed nervously.

The little man beat his hand on the table. Then he pushed back his chair.

"You don't look like a hard-hearted man," he said.

Dixon flushed slightly.

"I'm not exactly," he explained, thinking of Angelina and the young lady who sang on the Margate pier.

The stranger rose and paced up and down the room. He was on the other side of the table when he stopped suddenly and faced Dixon.

"Tell me," he said, and his face looked almost haggard, "are you married? Have you a wife you love, and children who call you daddy, and put their soft little arms round your neck and kiss you?" A dry sob choked the stranger, and he began walking up and down again, to and fro, between the fireplace and the window.

At last he stopped and drew the blinds aside. He pressed his forehead against the glass and looked out with unseeing eyes.

"Tell me," he said, turning round suddenly, "how would you like to go to prison? How would you like to lie on a bed of straw, and think of those dear ones at home praying for you and starving, starving, starving, while you served your term of imprisonment? How would you like it?" he repeated, coming up to the table

and bringing his hand down with a thump that nearly started the life out of Dixon.

That young man had been at first mystified by the stranger's earnestness and deep agitation, but he found himself growing hotter and hotter at these insinuations. He had no idea it was a question of imprisonment, and what were these false charges of marriage someone was bringing against him? He may have fallen, but he had not sinned. He was indignant that any one should even suppose that he had been a husband and a father when he had been courting Angelina. He got up and stood facing the stranger.

"How dare you insult me," he began; but the little man interrupted him.

His face wore a far-away expression, and he evidently had not heard what Dixon said.

"Look here," he whispered, "I don't want to give you unnecessary trouble. What I want to know is this: Can anything in the world induce you to go back to England alone and at once, without saying a word about seeing me?"

Dixon said afterwards you could have knocked him down with a feather. Then with his usual penetration he saw through the mystery. The detective they had sent after him wanted to go after the bank robber. It was a bigger job, with more attaching to it, more fame and a greater reward.

The idea of being left to go back to England by himself pleased him mightily. He would take the trip *viâ* America.

"I am quite willing to go back alone," he said.

There was a knock at the door.

"If any gentlemen are going by the midnight mail," the proprietor said, putting his head in, "the 'bus starts in ten minutes."

The stranger looked at Dixon, and Dixon looked at the stranger, and they both looked on the floor.

"Well," said the little man, "it rests with you whether I go by the midnight train or not. Can you be trusted?"

Dixon held out his hand.

"I'll never breathe a word of this meeting," he said, fervently. He had never expected that things would turn out so well as this.

The little man opened his bag and took out a roll of papers. He thrust them into Dixon's hand, and then went out hurriedly. Dixon has never seen him again to this day, and he never wants to.

"This is the summons and other interesting legal documents, I suppose," he said to himself. "What an ass that detective must be," he went on throwing the bundle down on the table unopened. "I wonder whether he really thinks I am going quietly back to England."

Another drink seemed more in his line just then, and he ordered a brandy and soda.

"It's all Angelina's fault," he said to himself apologetically, when the waiter brought in the refreshments.

How long he sat in that room he did not know. The sudden fright and the merciful escape had upset his nerves.

Then he stretched out his hand and carelessly opened the roll of papers.

They rustled as he spread them out, and his heart suddenly jumped into his mouth.

Bank notes for £10,000!

"Horace Dixon you're an ass!" he said to himself, and then he rang the bell for brandy. "You might bring in two, I think," he said to the waiter, and he drank them both down, one after the other.

He saw it all now. The little man was the bank cashier, who had mistaken him for a detective, and this was his bribe, £10,000, to say nothing about the meeting. He felt he ought to laugh, but his throat was dry, and his head burning.

* * * * *

Two days later he called upon the firm of London solicitors, and paid the £1,500 down without a murmur. It was an easy way of getting out of the difficulty. His conscience smote him, it is true, for he felt in a way that the money belonged to the bank; but after all it had been obtained honestly enough, and the balance would do nicely for setting up house with the girl on the Margate pier.

The next day they arrested him for complicity in the great bank robbery, and he is still trying to make the authorities believe his story. Angelina has been arrested, too, but there is every chance of their getting off. The fright will do them both good probably, and at all events Dixon will be cured of falling in love too easily.

All That Was Left.

"Professor, what has become of Tom Appleton? Wasn't he studying with the class last year?" "Ah, yes, Appleton—poor fellow. A fine student, but absent-minded in the use of chemicals—very. That discolouration on the ceiling. Notice it?" "Yes." "That's he." "I'm not surprised. I always thought Tom would make his mark if he got a chance."

What He Wanted.

The young man's face was flushed, and his manner was strangely agitated. As he addressed the fair girl before whom he stood, a faint tremor was noticeable in his voice. "Miss Blanche," he said, "I hesitated about coming to you, but my feelings have overpowered me at last. Will it be too much for me to ask——" "Pray go on," said the maiden, with heart wildly beating, as his face faltered. Yes, they were coming, the words that she and her dear mamma had so long waited for. "Pray go on," she said again, as he stood looking at her with burning eyes. "I came to ask you, Miss Blanche——" "Yes," she smiled encouragingly. "If it would be too much trouble for you to write off that recipe which you said you had for warding off indigestion. I'm sure I'm going to have it, and those confounded doctors always charge so much for a prescription."

OUR GREAT NEW SERIAL.

"Link by Link."

THE UNRAVELLING OF A DEEP MYSTERY.

Starts Next Week.

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A Strange Weapon.

WE had finished dinner and settled ourselves on either side of the fire to smoke and talk. After some time the conversation turned to the subject of valuables and I asked my host which of his many possessions he most valued. He shut his eyes and leant lazily back in his chair as if thinking deeply.

"I never really thought much about it," he said at last. "There are two or three things I value very highly, but perhaps, of all my possessions, a curious weapon which was the means of saving me in what might easily have been a very nasty experience some years ago is most worthy of my regard. From a monetary point of view it is worth practically nothing, but if I had not chanced to have it with me on the occasion of which I speak, things might have gone badly with me and with Minnie too, for the matter of that." Minnie was his wife and was staying with friends.

My curiosity was excited. I had never known John Harpenden had been in any particularly dangerous predicament and I said so.

"No, I daresay you didn't hear of it," he replied, "but if you like I'll tell you the story now and also show you the weapon. Or suppose you try and guess what it is. I'll give you three guesses, though I don't suppose you would find it out in thirty."

I suggested the first weapon that occurred to me, a revolver.

He smiled indulgently and shook his head. "Nothing so hackneyed as that, my friend."

"A dagger?"

"No."

As the mention of legitimate weapons seemed only to amuse him I spent my third guess in suggesting that the weapon might be a walking-stick.

Harpenden laughed and rose from his chair. "No one has ever guessed," he said as he opened a small cabinet, took out a wooden box and put it on the table before me. With great solemnity he raised the lid and lifted out—a patent leather shoe, a new, shining, lady's little evening shoe, with a high heel and neat little silver buckle.

I stared speechless. Surely Harpenden was joking.

"You look mystified," he observed complacently, "and if I may say so, rather sceptical. But wait till you hear my story. One December night several years ago Minnie and I went out to dinner with some friends.

"We were then living at Thornfield which as you know is quite in the country, and the friends with whom we were to dine occupied a house about a mile away. Well, Minnie (though the sweetest little woman in the world) is like the rest of her sex in wanting to show off her belongings, so, though the dinner was no very big affair she put on all her warpaint, including the diamond necklace which was left to her by her old godmother and which is very valuable. Our village only boasted one cab in which we drove to the Elmers (our friends) and I told the man to call for us again at eleven o'clock.

"However, he never came at that time nor, though we waited and waited till nearly mid-night. Mrs. Elmer wanted us to stay the night and I suggested that I should go and hunt for the missing cab and bring it back for Minnie. However she decided that the simplest thing to do would be for both of us to walk home.

"It was a lovely moonlight night, and the distance was nothing to speak of. Elmer and a friend who was staying with him offered to escort us, but we refused the offer. We knew the way perfectly and had no fear Minnie wrapped herself up and we started.

"Just about half-way, there was a particularly lonely little piece of lane with a hedge on either side. The lane led through a wood on the other side of which was our house. Just as we reached the entrance of the wood two men seemed to grow up out of the ground before us.

"As a matter of fact they had really been crouching in the hedge and we did not see them till they stepped in front of us. They had on masks and of course we both knew in a moment what they wanted, Minnie's necklace and any odd trifles such as my watch and her rings and bracelets besides.

"We found afterwards that they were a gang of three. The third had engaged the solitary cab on a fictitious errand and so arranged that it was impossible for it to return to the village in time to call for us. They knew of course that Minnie would wear her diamond necklace and they imagined that to ask for it would be to get it from a woman and one unarmed man. But they were a little out of their reckoning.

"Though I say it myself, I am no coward, and, unarmed as I was, I determined to fight for the diamonds in spite of the assurance of one of the robbers that they would not hurt us if we made no resistance. Almost unconsciously I put my hand in my pocket for a weapon and there I felt Minnie's shoes which I was carrying for her. I thought that a blow with the sharp heel would probably be more efficacious than one with my fist and I put out my hand calling 'Keep off!'

"To my utmost amazement both men stopped dead, they stared at my hand as if fascinated, then simultaneously muttering, 'He's armed!' they turned and made off as fast as they could.

"They were very raw highwaymen no doubt, but things might have been very nasty for us, had it not been for the shoe. In a second the reason of their terror dawned upon me. As I said, it was a moonlight night, and the moon shining upon the patent-leather shoe gave it in some inexplicable way, the appearance of a revolver, the glint of the silver buckle helping the illusion.

"They did not wait to investigate it; so far as their eyes could tell, a revolver was levelled at them and they thought flight their safest course. But ill-luck attended them. They ran straight into the arms of some workmen returning from the village and a little time afterwards I had the satisfaction of hearing them sentenced to a term of imprisonment. And now you know why I value this strange weapon."

CLAUDIA ASHTON.

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CATS AND DOGS.

The Winning of the Dean's Daughter.

THE dean's cheeks are flushed a deep red beneath the eyes; the rest of his face is shaded with a stiff grey stubble of twenty-four hours' growth. It is not, if the truth be known, the healthy glow of sleep which has caused that sudden colouring, so conspicuous by its contrast with the immaculate, tasselled night-cap, and the snowy bed-clothes. Those widening circles, as the vergers and choristers have good cause to know, are the finger-marks of a dangerous and exceedingly irritable temper.

Annoyance, perhaps, was excusable under the circumstances. The dean was a man whose movements for the last twenty-five years had been regulated with clock-like precision. It was his habit to read prayers every night at a quarter to ten and after embracing his daughter to turn out the great brass lamp in the hall, and to reach his bedroom just as the cathedral bells chimed that hour.

Once in bed, it was his intention and his custom to sleep until the gentle insinuating clatter of his man-servant with the shaving water and the shutters enticed him almost unconsciously from the infinite realms of dreamland on the stroke of half-past eight.

It is now only six, and his slumbers have been rudely disturbed.

He sits up in bed and rubs his eyes. He hears nothing but the shrill chattering of the sparrows playing and quarrelling among themselves in the variegated ivy which covers the whole side of the Deanery, mingled with china-roses and masses of yellow jasmine.

"I'm sure I heard something," he says, catching sight of himself in the long mirror in the wardrobe, and adjusting his night cap.

However, the cause of his disturbance, whatever it may have been, is hushed, and with a sigh of intense vexation, which is the synonym of an oath in the dean's vocabulary, he settles himself down again and pulls the blankets more closely round him to repulse the fresh morning air which is creeping into his warm bed, and insinuating itself in a most aggressive way between his shoulder blades.

His regular breathing tells that he is once more asleep, when the same shrill wail of agony which had startled him before floats in through the half-open window.

In a moment the dean is out of bed and paddling across the polished boards with naked feet. The circles below his eyes are burning brightly, and his whole face wears an expression of extreme earnestness. The boards are very cold, and the dean, remembering a trick of his youthful days, snatches a bath towel from the washing-stand and throwing it on the ground, shuffles along on this moving carpet to the window.

It is a beautiful summer's morning, and outside everything is bathed in sunshine.

On the right a well-kept lawn of velvety turf slopes down to the grey old cathedral walls, and on the other a thick shrubbery, broken here and there with a border of gaily painted flowers, half hides the tall green fence which divided the dean's garden from the bishop's palace.

Immediately in front the broad gravel path which diverges at the basin of the fountain, and comes together on the farther side, leads down to the little gate in the iron railing which is the boundary of his lordship's park.

The dean from his window can see nearly three miles across this gently undulating pasture-land, here rolling a great bank towards the early sun until every dew-bathed blade of grass is silvered, and there sloping gently backwards towards the west in solemn shade, clothed with huge beds of bracken and stunted undergrowth.

Here and there some magnificent forest tree stands out in solitary grandeur, its lower branches trimmed with absolute exactness where the deer have nibbled, while on the crest of the farthest hill the sun is already throwing shadows through a cluster of hoary oaks which wave their gnarled branches in a soft midsummer breeze, and suggest further scenes of sylvan beauty down in the miniature valley below.

The dean has already expressed his belief that there is a time for everything. Standing on a damp towel at the open window, shielded only by a fluttering night-shirt and a cap, he does not see his way to bestowing even one thought on the glories of that early morning scene, and his whole attention is concentrated on an effort to trace the unearthly sounds which are disturbing the pleasant hours of his well-earned rest.

It is not long before he recognises in those agonised cries the voice of Beetle, his daughter's favourite cat. As the cause of all this commotion is invisible, most men would have contented themselves with throwing a boot into the bushes and, having called down a few maledictions on the head of the unfortunate creature, would have crept back into bed.

The dean, however, had not left his warm couch for nothing, and he does not intend to get back again until the cause of his disturbance has been removed. He is fully conscious of the fact that such an exceedingly well-behaved cat as Beetle would never be making all that noise unless she had some very good and excellent reason, and he therefore peers about in all directions to discover where she may be hidden, and, if possible,

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the circumstances which are converting the serene old tabby into a public nuisance.

It was not long before he had solved the problem. At the farther end of the shrubbery, half-hidden behind a clump of lilacs, there is a straw-thatched summer-house, and through the mullioned window he can, by standing on tip-toe and straining his neck, just make out the outline of a boy in a red and white blazer and a straw hat.

"Ha, ha!" he mutters to himself; "the bishop's boy again! Wait a minute, my young friend; wait a minute!"

In a second he is slipping on his trousers, and there is a gleam of satisfaction in his eye, which can hardly be accounted for merely by the pleasure of getting up in the early hours of the morning to punish an erring schoolboy.

This is by no means the first time that he has discovered the bishop's boy climbing over that green fence for the sake of victimising Beetle. On three occasions he has remonstrated with his lordship, and each time he has been snubbed—once in the presence of all the Chapter.

The bishop had raised his hands in pious horror. One of his boys treating an animal cruelly! The idea was preposterous. The dean must be mistaken. The dean ventured to maintain that he knew what he was talking about, and the bishop had retorted that such a suggestion amounted to a personal rebuke for not having brought up his children as they ought to have been brought up.

The bishop was rather a quick-tempered man, and, annoyed at what he considered unwarrantable interference on the part of the dean, he had even gone so far as to hint that before preaching to other fathers about the management of their children, it would perhaps be just as well if he turned his attention to his own home. A smile had gone round the Chapter-room at this sally, for the dean's daughter had a reputation in the neighbourhood for being a desperate flirt, and for having broken the hearts of all the curates attached to the cathedral.

This accounted for the lines of exultation which hovered round the dean's stern mouth as he put on his shoes and then unhooked the strap from the wall, which hung there for the sole purpose of putting a keen edge on his razor.

"I'll make that boy's sitting-places an abhorrence to him," he chortles to himself. "I will brand him this time, and the bishop shall see the marks and apologise. I will take down his lordship's pride in these boys who spend their holidays breaking down my fences, robbing my fruit trees, plundering my garden, and teasing my daughter's cat. They may be the sons of the bishop, but they're worse than the village boys," and the circles on the dean's face grow larger as he pushes open his bedroom door and slips noiselessly down the stairs.

The grass is soaking wet, and his bedroom slippers are not waterproof, but in the excitement of the chase the dean prefers to run the risk of rheumatism to the chance of warning the boy of his approach by walking on the gravel.

He dodges mysteriously from tree to tree and from shrub to shrub, occasionally standing still or crouching down to listen intently, and all the time caressing the strap with a loving hand. Finally he disappears into the bushes, breaking thousands of fairy barriers, woven in silver gossamer from leaf to leaf, and bringing down a whole shower of dewdrops in his path.

As he does so a disinterested spectator might have noticed a small boy with a very scared face, in a red and white blazer and a straw hat, hastily clambering over the green paling into the bishop's garden.

At last the dean arrives at the door of the summer-house, soaked to the skin, and shivering with the cold, and as he creeps in with a self-satisfied chuckle he finds himself face to face with Beetle, tied hand and foot, and lying on her side.

"Confound it," he says, "the boy has gone after all. Oh! if I had only caught him," and the strap swishes through the air and whistles threateningly.

In the meantime there is nothing for it but to release the poor cat, which had apparently been playing the part of prisoner in some wild Indian game, and judging from her scared appearance, was momentarily expecting to be scalped, and having done this to let himself into the house again, and dawdle over his dressing until the breakfast bell rings.

The breakfast-room at the Deanery is quite the most charming in the house, and its broad windows, with the deep cushioned seats, look out over the same expanse of lawn and pasture-land as the dean's bedroom. In

The door opens, and Lilian comes in, dressed in her riding habit.

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the morning it gets the full benefit of all the sunshine, and more than once on Christmas Day the dean has sat with his back to the open window while his daughter has poured out his coffee from behind the great hissing silver urn.

This morning he is down first, which is hardly surprising, as for the last hour he has been doing nothing but wait for the sound of the gong. He stands for a few minutes watching the gardener sharpening his scythe with long musical sweeps of the rubber, and then he turns and carelessly takes up a pile of letters. The first four are addressed to his daughter, they are bulky and bilious, and the last is in the well-known handwriting of an old college friend.

He tears open the seal with unusual eagerness, and takes a hasty glance at the letter before he sits down at the table to read it carefully. Evidently it gives him satisfaction.

It has long been his secret and cherished wish that his daughter should marry the only son of this old friend of his boyhood days, although the two young people have never seen one another. At last he found courage to broach this delicate subject to his friend, and the answer is that Captain Fairley will be most charmed to accept the dean's kind invitation and to spend a week with his father's friend, of whom he has heard so much. There is a postscript, however, which for a moment threatens to bring out those red circles under the dean's eyes.

Captain Fairley wants to know if he may bring his terrier with him. He has heard of Lilian's attachment to her cat, and therefore he is all the more confident that his friendship for his dog will be appreciated by the dean. The two are never out of one another's sight for long.

The dean passes his hand across his forehead with a gesture of impatience and annoyance. He foresees that it is more than possible that all his carefully-laid plans may be frustrated by this innocent request which he cannot very well refuse.

"It's enough to turn Lilian against the man right away," he thinks. "There will be a fight between those two pets as sure as I am sitting here, and if Beetle is hurt, the child will never forgive me or Captain Fairley either. However, I suppose it can't be helped. I must warn her—no, on second thoughts, I don't think I will. It will be wisest to abstain from any reference to such an unpleasant subject. Ah, here she comes."

As he speaks the door opens, and Lilian comes in, dressed in her riding habit, and with a black straw hat tilted jauntily on the back of her head. She runs across the room and entwines her arms lovingly round his neck. She is a daughter of whom any father might be proud, and the dean may be pardoned for holding her at arms' length and gazing at her for fully a minute with a passionate admiration before he releases her.

Her hair is brown and wavy, her features small and regular, and when at rest they have a demure way of looking serious and motherly. It is only when she smiles, which she does at the smallest provocation, that her large grey eyes light up with roguish merriment, and she looks the very incarnation of the mischievous beauty which she is.

The morning greeting over, Lilian takes her place at the head of the table, and, all unconscious of the little conspiracy which her father's active brain has been concocting, she busies herself in the most matter-of-fact way with the cups and saucers.

Beetle sits herself on a high-backed chair by the side of her young mistress, and smacks her lips as she watches the cream poured out. She seems sublimely indifferent to the perils through which she has passed that morning, or else she is sharing the dean's anxiety that Lilian may be spared the pain of hearing anything about the discreditable adventure.

The dean is a man of immense tact, he is anxious to tell Lilian of to-morrow's visitor, and at the same time to avoid the slightest chance of her suspicions being aroused, or even put on the alert. He is perfectly aware of the fact that he has only to let her suppose that Captain Fairley is coming down with the intention of winning her affections, to remove the remotest chance of the ultimate union between them, which at this moment is the dearest project of his heart. If there is one thing to bring a high-spirited girl to open rebellion it is having a lover thrust upon her.

"Lilian, my dear," he says at last, laying down the paper and drawing his coffee a little nearer to him, "I hear this morning that the son of a very dear friend is coming down here to-morrow for a few days on—er—on business, my dear."

"On business, papa?"

The dean is a little ruffled at her tone of absolute incredulity.

"My dear," he says, "please don't emphasise your words in that way as if you considered it ridiculously impossible for your father to have such weighty matters as business to attend to."

"Is he good-looking, papa?" Lilian asks, slyly turning the subject.

The dean sees his opportunity, and does not hesitate to make full use of it.

"There you go at once," he exclaims, and then stops with well-feigned embarrassment, while Lilian raises her eyebrows in surprise.

"Little one," he goes on, after a moment's pause, during which he determines on a bold policy, "little one, you won't be angry with your father if he warns you against the dangers of flirting, especially with men like Captain Fairley. For all I know he may be engaged; a popular man like that is sure to be, and I would not have you losing your heart to him. If I were you I should see as little of him alone as you can. You understand, my dear, let your position as hostess be clearly understood."

The dean watches his daughter's face closely, and notes with much inward satisfaction that the bait has been swallowed. Woman-like, Lilian's interest and curiosity have been aroused, and she is secretly determining to make the most of the captain during his short visit, and exulting in the thought of meeting someone really worthy of her arts.

* * * * * *

Captain Fairley has not been in the house many hours before the dean has the gratification of finding that the two young people get on most admirably together, and especially when he is out of the room or pretending to be deeply engrossed in sermon-writing, which is always a good sign.

Only one thing now remains to make him the happiest man on earth, and that is one more opportunity for wiping off his old score with the bishop. He is more annoyed than he likes to confess at having been led on that wild goose chase after the boy in the red and white blazer, and the deliberate way in which the bishop has ridiculed his charges still rankles very bitterly with him.

He has taken to waking up at all sorts of unearthly hours in the morning, and lying in wait at his bedroom window in the hopes of once more catching that little

rascal in the garden, and he is quite sure that he shan't escape a second time. Ah! to take that saintly boy by the wrist and lead him round to the palace would be very sweet. The bishop would have to apologise, and that would be even sweeter.

However, just for a few days he would be glad if even this happiness might be withheld. His conscience tells him that the bishop's sarcastic suggestion that he should look to his own home would have a special significance now, and much of the polish would be taken off the score if the bishop, after confessing that his faith in his own parental training had been shaken, could turn round and accuse the dean of actually encouraging his daughter in her forward ways, and even of importing a young man into the house for the purpose of carrying her off.

The dean is, if the truth be known, rather ashamed at having done so himself, and the bishop's taunt, if he guessed the truth, would be very bitter.

He takes the precaution of hinting to the bishop and his clergy, that Captain Fairley has come down on matters solely connected with business, and he determines that, whatever happens, they shall have no opportunity for guessing the truth.

On the last day of the captain's visit he has invited half the county to dinner to meet the bishop, and on the previous evening he follows Lilian to her bedroom, a very unusual occurrence.

Having played the part of a social hypocrite before, he has to stoop to mask himself again, and after gently reproving Lilian for the evident attachment which has sprung up between her and the captain in spite of his warning, he goes on to guard her against giving her guests the smallest opportunity for even guessing at the true state of affairs. He points out that until the captain has made a definite proposal, he would not for all the world have their names connected together, and Lilian promises to be on her very best behaviour.

Truth to tell the captain has fallen head over ears in love with the dean's daughter; he is fascinated by her beauty, enchanted by her vivacious manner.

Until his first appearance in the Deanery drawing-room, he had not the least idea why his father insisted upon his paying this visit to the dean, whom he knew little more than by sight; but when the truth dawned upon him that he had been sent down to this provincial town for the sake of marrying a certain young lady, he is not in the least disposed, for once in a way, to quarrel with the governor, especially as there are several bills which have shortly to be met with ready money, which, at present, is to be found only in his father's pockets.

There is one thing, however, which threatens to ruin his visit and to frustrate his father's purpose, and that is Lilian's affection for her cat. To begin with, he is madly jealous of the beast which comes in for all those caresses, and in the second place every opportunity which has presented itself for a comfortable *tête-à-tête* has been completely ruined by that confounded cat.

It is impossible to make love to a young lady who

She finds herself face to face with Captain Fairley.

will insist on talking about her pets instead of about her lover or herself. It was Beetle this, and Beetle that, and Beetle everywhere, until the captain was thoroughly exasperated.

One evening he even plucked up courage to remonstrate at having to take a second place in the girl's affections, and declared his jealousy of the cat with all the eloquence he could command.

This was when Beetle had her soft paws round her mistress' neck, and the occasion seemed specially appropriate. To his intense surprise and disgust he had been politely called a donkey for his pains. After this he had done nothing but wish Beetle dead and buried. In his

anger he muttered something about setting his dog at the wretched tabby, and unfortunately Lilian had overheard him.

Of course he only meant it in fun, but he confessed afterwards that the next hour or two were the warmest he had ever spent in his life, and that facing the fire of a whole Russian regiment was absolutely child's play in comparison.

After that he saw it would be impossible to close the career of that chaperonic cat, however stealthily he did it, for suspicion was sure to fall eventually on himself or his dog, and his own ends would be frustrated.

As for Lilian, her one and only objection to Captain Fairley was his friendship for that horrid little terrier, which in the first place she considered it great impertinence for him to have brought into the house at all. Its one delight seemed to be to chase Beetle, and the tabby was by no means used to making sport for dogs.

Miss Hillyard was every bit as much jealous of the dog as the captain was of the cat. She thought it ridiculous to try and make love to a man who could think of nothing but a stupid terrier.

As a matter of fact Captain Fairley had no idea what a fuss he made over his pet. It was so natural for him that the little fellow should occupy the warmest corner in his heart that he never considered the question at all.

To his mind it was quite impossible to think of a more engrossing topic of conversation, whereas Lilian, very naturally, looked at the matter from a different point.

On three distinct occasions she had shut Beetle up in her bedroom, because it seemed to her that there were times when two were company and three none, even if the third party was a cat, and each time, instead of a *tête-à-tête* which she had sacrificed so much for, that disgusting little terrier had turned up and done nothing else but jump on and off his master's knee and demand her admiration. She was a lover of animals, but she learnt to hate that terrier with a deadly hate.

At last the day comes which is to end the captain's visit to the Deanery. It is very unfortunate for all parties concerned that so many people are coming to dinner on this, of all days, but it is a matter of long standing, and there is no way of postponing it.

The captain is conscious that his hour has come. It is now or never so far as declaring his intentions is concerned. However, the morning was spoilt by the presence of Beetle, and the whole afternoon Lilian made herself disagreeable on account of the terrier.

They have had five o'clock tea with the dean, and in an hour's time some of the guests will begin to arrive. Lilian goes off to dress without a word to Captain Fairley. He sees that his only chance is to follow her example, and by dressing early he may have an opportunity of getting one last word alone with her.

Lilian is the first down. She has not seen Beetle since tea time, and she goes out into the garden to look for her. It is a beautiful evening, but the heat is almost oppressive and the air is heavily scented with the perfume of flowers and newly-cut hay.

She has an idea that the captain will be coming out to look for her in a minute, and she is glad. As she reaches the shrubbery she hears a faint noise behind her, and turning round she sees the captain's terrier coming across the smooth, velvety lawn, and in another moment she expects to hear his master's footsteps. However, nothing comes.

Then a sudden idea enters her head. The terrier has been delivered into her hands. She will shut it up in that old oak chest in the summer-house until after dinner. It will be out of the way then if the captain does—"yes, quite so." And smiling to herself she takes the little fellow up in her arms and disappears through the bushes.

In the meantime Captain Fairley has come down to look for Lilian, and not meeting her in the drawing-room he goes out by the back way, expecting to find her in the green-house tending the flowers. However, she is not there, and he strolls through the kitchen-garden and enters the shrubbery from the other side, intending to collect his tennis things from the summer-house.

Presently he becomes conscious of a soft pitter-patter behind him, and turns round to find Beetle rubbing herself against his legs. The captain is a man of the world. He knows Lilian is probably near, and he takes the cat up with an extravagant show of affection, and lathers it with all the endearing terms he can conjure up. In this way he reaches the summer-house, and finds, rather to his surprise, that the girl is not there after all.

A malicious gleam lights up his face. By a merciful dispensation of Providence the cat is at his mercy. He listens intently and can hear no one. What a glorious opportunity. It does not take him a minute to lift up the lid of that great oak chest and to drop that cat in.

"There, Mrs. Tabby," he says, with a savage chuckle. "That will do very nicely for you until after dinner. Perhaps now I shall have an opportunity of making love to your mistress without getting sworn at by you, and scratched."

He had hardly said these words when he hears the creepers outside rustling. Someone is coming. If the cat mews he is undone, and in a desperate plight he jumps into the cupboard where the tennis things are kept, and crouches down with his eye to the keyhole.

He is not surprised to see Lilian come in. But what in the world is she doing with his dog under her arm? He is simply breathless with amazement, and presses closer and closer to the cupboard door.

In the meantime Lilian's conscience is pricking her, and as she puts one foot in the summer-house she is seized with a sudden fear, and her terrified imagination can distinctly hear the captain coming after her across the lawn. In a moment she has banged the door, and stands quite still listening.

Then she opens the lid of the chest, drops the dog in, and—finds herself face to face with Captain Fairley.

She has not time to faint, or even to scream, for she is petrified by the terrific shrieks of agony which are coming from that box. There is no mistaking Beetle's voice.

In a moment she has thrown the lid open again, and is down on her knees by the side of the chest; but the captain, his face pale with agitation, pulls her back.

"For heaven's sake, don't put your hand in!" he cried. "The dog will bite you all to pieces!"

They peer into the chest together; but it is so dark that they see nothing but four round balls of fire and flying fur. Never was there such a terrible fight between a dog and cat.

Lilian is frightened out of her life, but there is no time for explanations.

"Oh, Beetle, Beetle!" she cries; "the dog is killing her! Oh, save her, captain! save her!"

The captain is perfectly aware that the dog would just as soon bite him as the cat, now that his blood is up, but there is nothing for it but to dive down and catch hold of the first thing his hands light on. This happens to be Beetle's tail, and he drags her out with the dog hanging on to her fur.

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Lilian, with a cry of pain, rushes forward and seizes her darling, while the wretched captain does what he can to disentangle the terrier, and now that he has time to think, he swiftly arrives at the conclusion that he is master of the situation.

Presently the two combatants are divided, and while Lilian binds up her cat in one corner of the summer-house, the captain attends to his dog's bleeding ears in the other.

There follows a few minutes' silence, broken only by the terrier's frantic barks and Lilian's sobs, while the cat swears terribly.

At last Lillian looks up through her tears.

"You brute," she says.

The captain feels his temper rise at this, but he takes rather a mean advantage of the girl.

"I thought you were so fond of your cat," he remarks, with a sneer.

"So I am," says Lilian indignantly. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I was only rather surprised at your setting my dog at her in that inhuman way. We do not generally throw dogs on to the top of cats we care for particularly."

"I didn't throw him on the top of her," Lilian cries. "You put her there, you nasty mean, sneaking fellow. What do you mean by touching my cat?"

"My dear Lilian, or—I—I mean Miss Hillyard—how can you talk such nonsense? If it comes to that, what do you mean by throwing my dog into that great chest? I suppose you knew it was the only thing in the world I love, and thought you would leave it there to die."

"You put my cat in first," Lilian retorts with a sob, and then the whole thing seems so ridiculous that she cannot help laughing, and the captain laughs, too.

After a time, as these things will, it comes out that it was only their love for one another that leads them to this ridiculous climax, and in making this delightful discovery they grow so emphatic and demonstrative that the dog and cat get loose and have another go at one another amidst the most terrific yells.

"I say, we had better get out of this," says the captain, when the combatants are once more separated. "It must be getting late."

He picks up the terrier under his arm and gropes his way towards the door, for the window is so overgrown with ivy that it is growing dark in there.

Suddenly he turns round with an exclamation of horror.

"My dear Lilian, what have you done to the handle?"

Lilian runs forward, and they find that in slamming the door, she has jarred the handle off inside, and the iron joint has fallen to the ground outside.

"Wait a minute and I will get my knife," Captain Fairley says, and then he finds that in dressing he has left it in his bedroom.

He tries to break the door open by force, but it is made of solid iron-bound oak in imitation of a church door, and all his weight makes no impression whatever. Then they try shouting, but no one appears.

There is nothing for it but to make the best of a very bad job and wait until someone comes to the rescue.

"It won't be very nice to be found out here together by the servants, will it?" Lilian suggests, and the captain agrees with her.

"We may be here all night," he says, "if they don't hear us. But, by Jove, they must be deaf if they don't hear this infernal din."

At the thought of this last catastrophe Lilian bursts into tears again, and the captain feels that it is his duty to comfort her. He suggests that they shall tie the dog in one corner with a handkerchief, and the cat in the other. They won't be so hampered in that way, and in another minute the lovers are so engrossed that they forget all about the dinner party, and everything else in the world but their love.

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The dean is rather late with his dressing, and once or twice he fancies that he hears strange sounds at the other end of the garden, but as the summer-house door and his window are both shut, nothing very distinct reaches his ear, and he rather fancies it must be some drunken men in the town.

He hears the bishop's voice downstairs, and one by one all his guests arrive. He fondly imagines that Lilian is entertaining them, and he does not hurry.

At last his white tie is finished, and he opens his bedroom window, and looks out across the park. At this moment Beetle and the terrier have just got at one another for the second time, and in an instant the dean recognises the cat's voice.

"Ha," he cries, dancing with delight, "the bishop's boy again. At last! At last I am avenged."

The butler is rather surprised to see his master coming down the stairs three steps at a time, and the dean so excited that he scarcely stops to shake hands with all his astonished guests before he buttonholes the bishop.

"Come, my lord," he says with a glance of triumph and a voice loud enough to be overheard by many of the clergy standing round, "I want you to come into the garden for a minute and I will show you something which you would never believe unless you saw it with your own eyes. I want to show you the result of a father bringing up his children with boundless confidence in himself and in them, and also to impress upon you a fact which you are slow to believe—I mean that a man who brings up his family in what he considers the right way and does not take the trouble to watch them closely is a foolish man. Of course, I am aware that it is more difficult to make you believe this as you are the father of such a saintly set of children, but—" and the dean, with a smile to the assembled company, leads the way through the French window followed by the greater number of his guests.

His delight, as he hears the cat still screaming, is almost too much for him, and as they reach the summer-house he catches the sound of half-inaudible voices. The boys are trapped this time and no mistake. How foolish the bishop will look.

He picks up the handle which has fallen to the ground, fits it in very quietly, and then opening the door, stands back to make way for the bishop.

His cup of joy is full, when a titter runs round that interested group of guests, but he is hardly prepared to hear the bishop give an embarrassed little cough, and then join with the others in a covert smile. He looks in himself and sees Lilian and the captain standing hand in hand, while a wounded cat is mewing in one corner, and a bloodstained terrier in the other.

"I was not aware that such sports went on so near to the cathedral, Mr. Hillyard," the bishop says with grave disapproval as he sees the poor cat and dog for the first time.

And then he turns round and walks towards the house, followed by the rest of the guests, and leaving the unfortunate dean to collect his thoughts as best he can.

W. A. W.

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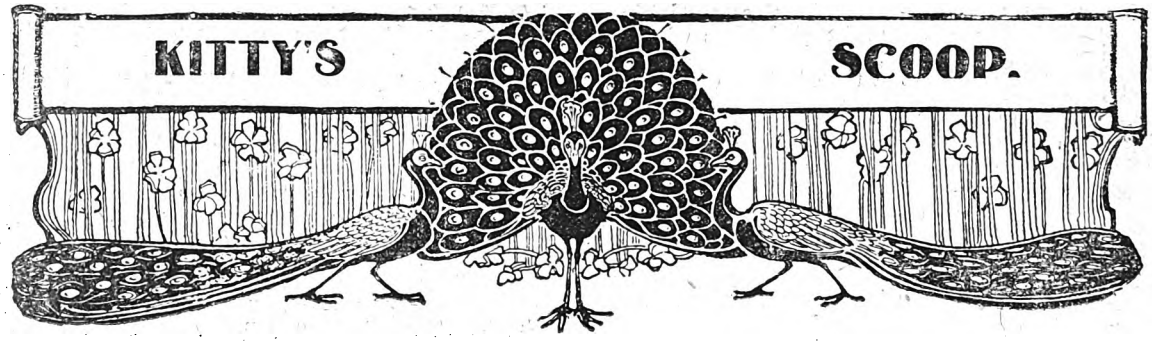

"I SCARCELY think you could get an interview from him, on any condition whatever," continued Mr. Joseph Harvey, editor of the *Empire Monthly*, leaning back in his chair. "We have frequently asked him to print something of his inner life, the methods of his work, and so on, but he always slips out of the calculations somehow, and the result is that while we have a hundred letters every month asking us to print something about the personality of the man who has the whole literary world trailing after him by the writing of one book, we can furnish nothing to satisfy the appetite of our readers."

Harvey sighed.

It was a girl that answered:

"But you see I don't intend to go about it like the official interviewer. He has just gone down to his new farm in Cornwall, and there they say he is as natural as the trees on his land, and as easily approached. Why not let me write the article after a few weeks of association right on the spot—his next-door neighbour, as it were? I can lodge at one of the neighbouring houses, on the pretence that I am there for the good of my health. Then I can watch him performing his daily tasks. All the while I can, by feigning a natural interest in agricultural affairs, get down to the bottom of his nature. Perhaps he will—yes, he cannot help branching out into what is his real interest in life. Doesn't that seem like a plan that will succeed, Mr. Harvey?"

"You don't know the man, Miss Tippin, he'll know your mission the first time he sets eyes on you, and he'll shut up like an oyster. But," he continued, "if you can get a truthful insight into his nature we will handle the article with much pleasure. It must be truth, though."

And Miss Tippin said, "All right," and left.

* * * * *

"Are you the boy that was to meet Miss Tippin at the station?" said that young lady, addressing a shabbily dressed urchin, who seemed to be looking for some one.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered. "Are you the lady?" he inquired shyly. Explanations followed, and soon the two were off down the dusty road, in a one-horse cart, the trunk and small luggage behind, and Miss Tippin holding her parasol over the boy, who held the reins.

"And you say your farm is next to that of Mr. Arthur Fairfax?" said Miss Tippin affably. (Arthur Fairfax was the celebrity she was trying to get at.)

"Yes, ma'am," said the boy, relapsing into silence.

"What does he do?"

"Oh, just farms, I s'pose. There ain't nothing else to do here." Then the boy turned and looked at Miss Tippin. "But he only come last month"

Miss Tippin smiled. So Fairfax was posing purely as a farmer! So much the better. She could pose as one with much interest in the same pursuit herself. She thought it best not to talk too much about the celebrity, for the boy had looked questioningly at her, and she knew he had a notion to ask her if she knew the man. Too much interest might arouse suspicion, and Fairfax might get to hear of it. So she talked commonplaces with the boy till they arrived at the little cottage where she was to make her headquarters while reconnoitring and taking the measurement of greatness.

The next morning Miss Tippin awoke with the songs of birds tickling her ears. It had rained during the night, and the cool breath of June filled the heart of the valley with jubilation. The perfume of some strange sweet blossom drifted in the window, and the sun danced like diamond gems in the rain drops that hung to the lobes of the leaves.

Miss Tippin was not the sort of girl to let nature run away with her real mission, however. She kept a keen look out for the celebrity as she busied herself exploring the place. She ventured out far into an adjoining meadow, edged with a little wood, and curiously pryed into spaces the hawthorn had not crowded into, and looked over the bank of a babbling brook, in the hope of catching the great man in one of his wandering moods, gazing up at the sky, thrilled at the birds, or talking back to the saucy brooklet.

She had given up her search for the morning. Returning home, she was just a trifle cross with herself, and the celebrity. Now, if there is one thing a cross girl ought not to meet, it is a five-barred gate. And that is just what Miss Tippin did meet. It stood up before her, bold and impregnable, as she emerged from the little woodland, and no hole to crawl through!

Beyond was an open field. The brambles and hawthorn branches extended up and even over the gate on the side from which she was to make the attack.

"Bother it!" blurted out Kitty Tippin.

She looked out over the field. She saw no person. Then she climbed up the gate, carefully gathering her skirts, and made the half-slide, half-leap that girls use when getting down from a gate. Not a trifle of her skirt caught.

But as she started to walk the first step, her head was jolted backward, and she felt a tug at her hair. One of the bramble twigs had caught her.

She put her hand up to loosen it.

There stood the celebrity!

Not out in the field, where she had looked, but quite close to her.

He was looking at her quizzically. Kitty Tippin felt

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somewhat confused. One hand she raised desperately to release her hair from the bramble, but every effort seemed only to make the tangle the tighter.

The celebrity seemed to comprehend the trouble.

"Pardon, Miss; can I be of assistance?" He advanced. Kitty had to smile. He had a hoe in one hand and his hat in the other. The soil clung to his shoes in great chunks every step he took.

"Do you own this farm?" asked the girl, evading the first question.

"I hate to acknowledge that I own the brambles," said the celebrity.

"But you do?" persisted the girl, standing erect, with one loop of golden-red hair drawn out and twisted about the impertinent bramble twig. It was one way of making sure that she had caught the genius.

"Well, I'm the landowner, and the labourer, and the water boy, and several other personages all in one. But may I not untangle the briar?"

"Before I give you that honour, promise me that you will clear away the brambles before I come down this way again."

"Trespassers don't, as a usual thing, demand that a path be cut through farms they want to tramp over——"

"And also I want you to promise that you will build a stile at this crossing-place," continued the girl, never noticing the interruption.

"And I'll root up a row of corn from this place right to the other end of the field, so that the stalks won't worry you later on in the season," he added, and the girl saw that he was facing about in his tactics.

"But do you promise?"

The celebrity hesitated.

"Then I hang here for an eternity," said the girl, "for you would release me only to set the trap again the next time I wish to climb that gate."

"I promise." He said this solemnly, and stuck the hoe into the soft soil. Then he wiped his hands on his trousers, and soon had the lock of hair free.

"Thank you," said the girl quietly. "Men never like their deeds of honour to go unnoticed, and that you may know who remembers yours——" She handed him her card, and he looked at it with a smile.

"Sorry I haven't any card," he said. The hard-used hands went deep into the muddy trousers, with yellow finger-marks on them.

"Oh, it doesn't matter much. I know you are too gallant to be the labourer, and I have heard of the genius who owns the land—and the brambles."

"The genius?"

"Yes, isn't that what they call them?".

"Well, I've been called about everything else since I came down here to farm, so I expect I can stand that too."

He laughed, half to himself; so merrily to himself that she thought him slightly impolite. But celebrities always are. She turned to go. He started too.

"Don't neglect the farming, pray, and the brambles," with an upraised hand to stay him.

"But—" and he made a couple of steps forward.

"Finish the row, that's more important."

"I just finished a row."

"And were just beginning another," and she hurried over the soft field, the man standing like the official dummy in front of a marked-down clothing house.

He looked at the brambles. One branch he eyed curiously for a moment, then drew from the leaves a long, golden-red hair.

The bramble he chopped down with his hoe, and threw away. But men never throw away golden-red hair.

* * * * *

The evening after meeting the celebrity, whom we must now refer to as Kitty Tippin referred to him—as Mr. Arthur Fairfax—the girl wrote a short letter to the editor of the *Empire Monthly*, telling him that she had fortunately met the genius under most favourable circumstances, and that she would immediately start to take down his theories on corn-planting; his snappy briefs on nature; his love of yellow mud; his deftness in getting people out of difficulties in real life, as well as in his books; his laughing blue eyes, with as many shades to them as hours in the day; his laws concerning trespassers on his premises; his capacity for doing everything at the same time; his occasional bursts of brusqueness that almost disarmed confidence in his claim to gentility, and his apparent youth, notwithstanding the seasoning of his wisdom. All of which mightily pleased the editor of the *Empire Monthly*. So he wrote back to "enter into the details of Fairfax's life, no matter if there is a great deal of yellow corn mixed in."

Then Kitty Tippin felt that she had a real start. She had met the celebrity, had evidently made impression enough upon him to interest him as much as his corn-field, which he had asked to leave for her sake, and had received authority from the *Empire Monthly* to find out all about his crops and his hair and his eyes, and to jot it down and give it to the world in burning lines of truth.

It was pleasant work, this detective authorship, too, and Kitty Tippin went about it with a smile in her heart and an air of confidence. All of which she was justly entitled to, under the circumstances, seeing that she was solving her problems according to the schedule.

For three weeks Mr. Arthur Fairfax kept giving up his secrets to Miss Kitty Tippin. The girl found the celebrity very much like other men—sometimes she thought he was considerably finer than some grades of mankind—and he sifted through the sieve of her ideal exactions without a second's coaxing: again, she discovered lumps in his nature, and when the gold had drained off she saw the dross in his heart. Then she changed her mind about celebrities.

But more often she changed the measure of her sieve, and let the hints of the mud that were in the man pass through without close investigation.

Now, when a man finds himself looking in a mirror in order to get extra glimpses of a girl turned from him, he can safely put it down that he is in love. And so with a girl. When she finds herself measuring with undue nicety the faults and frailties of a man, she, too, is in danger of finding that the gold is heavier than the clay. For all women are kind.

This is just the situation in which Kitty Tippin found herself. She did not know it though. As her work upon the biographical sketch progressed, however, she noticed that the fourth chapter had considerably more of the spirit of forgiveness for the faults of Mr. Fairfax than had the third chapter. This was an alarming symptom. But not for the girl. She thought it only a proof that she was learning more of the celebrity, who, in truth, had some symptoms himself, by this time, that he was not acquainted with. He noticed that he had more than unusual interest in the portion of the fence where he had cut down the brambles. He cleared away the weeds and the high grass. He built a three-step stile there, and always felt that he needed a rest when he got to the end of that row near that stile.

"I suppose it's because it's the only thing to sit down on," he said to himself one day. But what made him so furious when a crow on a dead limb not far away echoed peevishly: "Caw, caw"?

"You black fool!" he muttered. But crows are wise birds. They knew the stile had not been put up there for a scarecrow, even if it was on the edge of the cornfield.

When Kitty saw that stile and that tidy hedgerow, she had more clearly defined symptoms!

* * * * *

A week later the girl had sent off the article which she had worked upon through the pleasant month of June to the editor of the *Empire Monthly*. She felt that she had a "scoop" of decided value, and wrote as much to the editor. She might have taken it personally to the *Empire Monthly*, but she had a strong fancy that a "rose social" which was to be given at the neighbouring church two evenings later could not get along without her. The celebrity had said that same thing.

A week later the "rose social" was only a memory—but it had left a fragrance in Kitty Tippin's heart, She was sitting in the doorway of the cottage, thinking how only a celebrity could have framed the pretty phrase with which he had told her his love "closed the rose social," as he had said, "with the taming of his wild rose and the kiss of the rosebud lips."

It was a very sweet memory, that warm, dark night, with the mild odour of green things on the wayside and the music of his words, and Kitty put her face to the cluster of roses that hung by the doorway of the cottage and closed her eyes on the sweetness.

She was aroused by footsteps—pattering feet—and the boy who had driven her to the cottage from the station, and who was now her devoted servant, came up the pathway with a letter.

It was from the editor of the *Empire Monthly*, and it read:

> "What kind of nonsense are you sending us? We deem it possible that you were 'really in need of better health when you went to spy on the celebrity.' Mr. Arthur Fairfax has been in this office every day for the last month. In fact, he arrived before my letter could have reached you, and he had not been on his farm for a week before that time. We can't use the sketch, because, while Mr. Fairfax has a farm, he says he didn't plant a cabbage or a grain of corn. He knows nothing about building stiles, and your description of his personal appearance would be about as true as the biography of a polar bear sent in to throw light on the 'Personal Side of the Egyptian Sphinx.' You might dispose of this thing to one of the fiction magazines."

Kitty Tippin gasped. Fainting was not one of her accomplishments. After a long, dumb look she turned to the boy.

"Who owns this cornfield next to your farm?" she asked.

"Do you mean the one you go through so often?" said the boy.

"Well, y-e-s."

"Mr. Brighton owns that. He bought it this spring, you know, from Widow Brown. She's dead now That's her new grave up there at——"

"And what does Mr. Brighton do? I mean what did he do?"

"I don't know, miss. They said he was one of the high-up fellows in London, and that he got sick of all the fuss and just come here to live awhile. He must have money, though, for he has got good horses, and he isn't stingy. The fellows went to him one day, and— "

"But didn't you tell me that Mr. Arthur Fairfax lived on a farm next to yours? Don't you remember? You told me that coming in the cart from the station?"

"Yes, ma'am, but he's over here on the *other* side of our farm. The folks say he can't grow nothing. His farm begins just down over the hill, there."

"On the *other* side?" and the girl leapt to her feet. A moment later the boy heard her racing up the stairs and slamming the door of her room. He thought he heard sobs.

The editor of the *Empire Monthly* two days' later received a very short note from Kitty Tippin, declaring that "a very peculiar chain of circumstances over which she had had no control had led her into the unpardonable blunder," asking at the same time that "mercy be granted, as she had granted mercy to the villain who had been the cause of the mistake." In the autumn, however—in blushing October—the editor received another letter, and when he had opened the double envelopes, a card dropped out. He fished forth a stylish invitation, announcing that "Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Tippin requested his presence at the marriage of their daughter Katherine Gertrude, to Henry Watterson Brighton, at——"

The editor of the *Empire Monthly* was one of the prominent guests at the wedding. After the bride's cake had been cut, and Mrs. and Mr. Brighton had made their escape amid a shower of shoes and rice, the complacent editor told one of the best stories the smart set had added to its list in the season. He told it when Kitty's mother was not within hearing, and the guests had to lie to that lady when she innocently inquired about the cause of all the merriment.

"I say, Harvey, that story's worth keeping in the official roster," said one of the men to the editor. "What name shall we give it for reference purposes?"

"Let's see," said the editor, scratching his head Oh, yes, it wasn't printed, but here's a fine climax for the final chapter to-night. I think we'll call it 'Kitty Tippin's Scoop.'"

Aloysius Coll.

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Part III. will be ready on February 28th.

IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

"Another Woman" sends me a very nice letter and asks my qualification to give advice that may make or mar a life.———In reply I can only say that I have no qualification but my own sympathy with my correspondents and desire to help them with their love affairs. I cannot claim infallible wisdom, but I can tell them how I should act were I in their place, which they can adopt or reject according to their own personal feelings. Nobody can really advise a lover by cold calculation. One must just feel as they feel, and tell them such truths as perhaps, in the blindness of love, they have overlooked. In the long run, of course, love laughs at love experts, no less than locksmiths, and I daresay I shall come in for a certain amount of the merriment. But reasoning is to love what a signpost is to the traveller. It tells him were certain roads lead, but which he takes is his own affair I simply try, out of my own reasoning, to be a signpost, with sympathies.

"Difficulty" (aged twenty) is attached to a lady five years older than himself. He earns 25s. a week, with the prospect of double in three or four years' time. She earns £2 a week, but supports her widowed mother and family from it. Should he start courting her now, and if so, how?———I am sorry to have to be a horrid signpost in answering you. You will not be in a position to marry for three or four years. That would not be so unfortunate under other circumstances, but seeing that your friend is in business, and that several lives are dependent on her efforts I fear you would be doing ill in entertaining any ideas of marriage. In the first instance, your wife would have to throw up her business engagement, or neglect your household. If she did the former, the responsibility for her helpless relations must fall on you, which you could ill afford. There is no harm, however, in telling the girl the facts of the case; if she is willing to have a long courtship, well and good, though, at the same time, I should not advise it. And if she continued in business, you would have rather a rough time of it at home. A woman cannot work all day, and then turn to household duties without serious danger to her health, to say nothing of her happiness. Unless your business prospects look up very considerably within the next few years, I fear you would be encountering great trouble for both yourself and the girl by marriage under present circumstances.

You want to know of a wash or lotion for darkening fair hair, "Snowdrop," and yet keeping it glossy. Well, I am afraid unless you can afford to go to a first-rate hairdresser from time to time you will find it practically impossible. Hair dyes which are sold to the public are almost invariably worthless, and it needs a skilled hand to insure keeping the gloss on it. Why dye it at all? Fair hair is so pretty. Write to me as often as you like, and ask as many questions as you please. I shall always be glad to help you. Thanks for good wishes.

Now, "Dick," if you think for a minute, you will see that it is just a little selfish on your part to expect your sister to sew things for you and help you to attend to your goldfish and rabbits, and yet object when she asks you to make her house duties a trifle easier for her by keeping your room a little more tidy. My impression is that many boys and young fellows lose a great deal of pleasure in life by not treating their sisters in a brotherly way. They say "she is only a girl," as though that settled it; but you take my advice and treat your sister as your equal—she *is* your equal, though you may not like to acknowledge it—and you will be surprised to find how jolly it will be.

Of course, "Harry," young men have love troubles as well as young ladies, and your letter is just as welcome as from one of the opposite sex. You are desperately in love with a young woman, who is a little higher in the social scale than yourself, and on that account you feel that you cannot venture to tell her of your esteem for her. Yet you think that she has a similar feeling for you. You are making efforts to rise in the world and have reason to think that you will succeed. Well, you know that "faint heart never won fair lady," if you are backward in declaring yourself, the probability is that you will lose her. So "take your courage in both hands," as they say on the Continent, and tell her that you love her and of your prospects and plans for the future. I shall be surprised if you do not win her.

"M. W. B." was once a groom but is now a publican with means When a groom a young lady he walked out with disdained his suit because of his poverty. Now he is better off she has discovered she loves him. But meanwhile he has taken up with another damsel, who it appears always loved him.———I think you should obey your own feelings in this matter. Whom do you love the best, the girl who thought you were not good enough for her until you got your present position, or the girl who loved you all along? You should certainly marry the one you really love, and agree to let bygones be bygones. At the same time, the young lady who only began to think of you as a husband when you improved your finances would seem to be rather a worldly individual, and if I had the settlement of the matter, I should be strongly inclined to seal the union between you and the other one, whose love for you would appear to be the more enduring. But if it is the first one you love, don't hesitate to take her back to your bosom, if you can do it without breaking anyone's heart.

THE LOVERS OF YVONNE

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXIV (*continued*).

REJOICED to see the man so wide awake in him, I followed him closely across the terrace and through the rose garden to the bank of the river. This we followed until we came at last to the belt of willows, where, having found a suitable patch of even and springy turf, I drew my sword and invited him to make ready.

"Will you not strip?" he inquired sullenly.

"I do not think so," I answered. "The night air is sharp. Nevertheless, do you make ready as best you deem fit, and that speedily, Monsieur."

With an exclamation of contempt, he divested himself of his wig, mask, and doublet; then, drawing his sword, came forward and announced himself at my disposal.

As you may well conceive, we wasted no time in compliments, but straightway went to work, and that with a zest that drew sparks from our rapiers at the first contact.

The Marquis attacked me furiously, and therein lay his only chance; for a fierce, rude swordplay that is easily dealt with in broad daylight is vastly discomposing in such pale moonshine as lighted us. I defended myself warily, for of a sudden I had grown conscious of the danger that I ran did he once by luck or strength get past my guard with that point of his, which in the spare light I could not follow closely enough to feel secure.

'Neath the fury of his onslaught I was compelled to break ground more than once, and each time he was so swift to follow up his advantage that I had ne'er a chance to retaliate.

Still, fear or doubt of the issue I had none. I needed but to wait until the Marquis' fury was spent by want of breath to make an end of it. And presently that which I waited for came about. His attack began to lag in vigour, and the pressure of his blade to need less resistance, whilst his breathing grew noisy as that of a broken-winded horse. Then, with the rage of a gambler who loses at every throw, he reviled me with every thrust or lunge that I turned aside.

My turn was come; yet I held back, and let him spend his strength to the utmost drop, whilst with my elbow close against my side, and by an easy play of wrist, I diverted each murderous stroke of his point, that came again and again for my heart.

When at last he had wasted in blasphemies what little breath his wild exertions had left him, I let him feel on his blade the twist that heralded my first advance. He caught the thrust, and retreated a step, his blasphemous tongue silenced, and his living face bathed in perspiration.

Cruelly I toyed with him then, and with every disengage I made him realise that he was mastered, and that if I withheld the final blow, it was but to prolong his agony. And to add to the bitterness of that agony of his, I derided him whilst I fenced; with a recitation of his many sins I mocked him, showing him how ripe he was for death, and asking him how it felt to die unshriven with such a load upon his soul.

Goaded to rage by my bitter words, he ground his teeth, and gathered what rags of strength were left him for a final effort. And before I knew what he was about, he had dropped on to his left knee, and with his body thrown forward and supported within a foot of the ground by his left arm, he came, like a snake, under my guard, with his point directed upwards.

So swift had been this movement, and so unlooked for, that had I not sprung backwards in the very nick of time, this narrative of mine had ne'er been written. With a jeering laugh I knocked aside his sword, but even as I disengaged, to thrust at him, he knelt up and caught my blade in his left hand, and for all that it ate its way through the flesh to the very bones of his fingers, he clung to it with that fierce strength and blind courage that is born of despair.

Then, raising himself on his knees again, he struck at me wildly, I swung aside, and as his sword, missing its goal, shot past me, I caught his wrist in a grip from which I contemptuously invited him to free himself. With that began a fierce tugging and panting on both sides, which, however, was of short duration, for presently my blade, having severed the last sinew of his fingers, was set free. Simultaneously I let go his wrist, pushing his arm from me so violently that, in his exhausted condition, it caused him to fall over on his side.

In an instant, however, he was up and at me again. Again our swords clashed, but once only. It was time to finish. With a vigorous disengage I got past his feeble guard, and sent my blade into him full in the middle of the chest, and out again at his back, until a foot or so of glittering steel protruded.

A shudder ran through him, and his mouth worked oddly, whilst spasmodically he still sought, without avail, to raise his sword; then, as I recovered my blade, a half-stifled cry broke from his lips, and throwing up his arms he staggered and fell in a heap.

As I turned him over to see if he were dead, his eyes met mine, and were full of piteous intreaty; his lips moved, and presently I caught the words:

"I am sped, Luynes." Then struggling up, and in a louder voice, "A priest!" he gasped. "Get me a priest, Luynes. Lord! Have mer——"

A rush of blood choked him and cut short his utterance. He writhed and twitched for a moment, then his chin sank forward, and he fell back, Death stiffening his limbs, and glazing the eyes which stared hideously upwards at the cold, pitiless moon.

Such was the passing of the Marquis César de St. Auban.

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CHAPTER XXV.

Play-Acting.

For a little while I stood gazing down at my work; my mind full of the unsolvable mysteries of life and death, then I bethought me that time stood not still for me, and that something yet remained to be accomplished ere my evening's task were done.

And forthwith I made shift to do a thing at the memory of which my blood is chilled and my soul is filled with loathing even now, albeit the gulf of many years separates me from that June night at Canaples.

To pass succinctly o'er an episode on which I have scant heart to tarry, suffice it you to know I bound a heavy stone to St. Auban's ankle; then lifting the body in my arms, I half-dragged, half-bore it across the little stretch of intervening sward to the water's edge, and flung it in.

As I write I have the hideous picture in my mind, and again I see St. Auban's ghastly face grinning up at me through the moonlit waters, until at last it was mercifully swallowed up in their black depths, and naught but a swirling wavelet that spread swiftly across the stream was left to tell of what had chanced.

I dare not dwell upon the feelings that assailed me as I stooped to rinse the blood from my hands, nor yet of the feverish haste wherewith I tore my blood-stained doublet from my back, and hurled it wide into the stream. For all my callousness I was sick and unmanned by that which had befallen.

No time, however, did I waste in mawkish sentiment, but setting my teeth hard, I turned away from the river, and back to the trampled ground of our recent conflict. There, with no other witness save the moon, I clad myself in the Marquis' doublet of black velvet. I set his mask of silk upon my face, his golden wig upon my head, and over that his sable hat with its drooping feather. Next I buckled on his sword belt, wherefrom hung his rapier that I had sheathed.

In Blois that day I had taken the precaution, knowing the errand upon which I came, to procure myself knickerbockers of black velvet, and black leather boots with gilt spurs that closely resembled those which St. Auban had worn in life.

Now, as I have already written, St. Auban and I were much of the same build and stature, and so methought with confidence that he would have shrewd eyes, indeed, who could infer from my appearance that I was other than the same masked gentleman who had that very day ridden into Canaples at the head of a troop of His Eminence's guards.

I made my way swiftly back along the path that St. Auban and I had together trodden but a little while ago, and past the Château, until I came to the shrubbery where Michelot, faithful to the orders I had given him, awaited my return. From his concealment he had seen me leave the Château with the Marquis, and as I loomed suddenly up before him now, he took me for the man whose clothes I wore, and naturally enough assumed that ill had befallen Gaston de Luynes. Of a certainty I had been pistolled by him had I not spoken in time. I lingered but to give him certain necessary orders; then while he went off to join Abdon and see to their fulfilment, I made my way steathily, with eyes keeping watch around me, across the terrace, and through the window into the room that St. Auban had left to follow me to his death.

The tapers still burnt, and in all respects the chamber was as it had been; the back and breast pieces still lay upon the floor, and on the table the littered documents. The door, I ascertained, had been locked on the inside, a precaution which St. Auban had no doubt taken so that none might spy upon the work that busied him.

I closed and made fast the window, then I bethought me that being in ignorance of the whereabouts of St. Auban's bedchamber, I must perforce spend the night as best I could within that very room.

And so I sat me down and pondered deeply o'er the work that was to come, the part I was about to play, and the details of its playing. In this manner did I while away perchance an hour; through the next one I must have slept, for I awakened with a start to find three tapers spent and the last one spluttering, and in the sky the streaks that heralded the summer dawn.

Again I fell to thinking; again I slept, and woke again to find the night gone and the sunlight on my face. Some one knocked at the door, and that knocking vibrated through my brain and set me wide awake indeed. It was as the signal to uplift the curtain and let my play-acting commence.

Hastily I rose and shot a glance at the mirror to see that my wig hung straight and that my mask was rightly adjusted. I started at my own reflection, for methought that from the glass 'twas St. Auban who looked at me as I had seen him look the night before when he had donned those things at my command.

"*Hola* there, within!" came Montrésor's voice. "Monsieur le Capitaine!" And a fresh shower of blows descended on the oak panels.

I yawned with prodigious sonority and overturned a chair with my foot. Then bracing myself for the ordeal, through which I looked to what scant information I possessed and my own mother wit to bear me successfully, I strode across to admit my visitor.

Muffling my voice, as I had heard St. Auban do in the inn, by drawing my nether lip over my teeth.

"By Gad!" quoth I, as I opened the door. "It seems, lieutenant, that I must have fallen asleep over those musty documents."

I trembled as I watched him, waiting for his reply, and I thanked Heaven that in the *rôle* I had assumed a mask was worn, not only because it hid my features, but because it hid the emotions which these might have betrayed.

"I was beginning to fear," he replied coldly, and without so much as looking at me, "that worse had befallen you."

I breathed again.

"You mean?"

"Pooh, nothing!" said he, half-contemptuously. "Only methinks 'twere well whilst we remain at Canaples that you do not spend your nights in a room within such easy access to the terrace."

"Your advice no doubt is sound, but as I shall not spend another night at Canaples, it comes too late."

"You mean, Monsieur?"

"That we set out for Paris to-day."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Impossible! I have just visited the stables, and there are not four horses fit for the journey. So that unless you have in mind the purchase of fresh animals——"

"Pish! My purse is not bottomless," I broke in, repeating the very words that I heard St. Auban utter.

"So you said once before, Monsieur. Still, unless you are prepared to take that course, the only alternative is to remain here until the horses are sufficiently recovered. But perhaps you think of walking?" he added, with a sniff.

"Such is *your* opinion, your time being worthless, and it being of little moment where you spend it. *I* have conceived a plan."

"Ah!"

"Has it not occurred to you that the danger which threatens us, and which calls for the protection of a troop, is only on this side of the Loire, where the Bloisois might be minded to attempt a rescue of the Chevalier? But over yonder, Chevalier, on the Chambord side, who cares a fig for the Lord of Canaples or his fate? None; is it not so?"

He made an assenting gesture, whereupon I continued, "This being so, I have bethought me that it will suffice if I take but three or four men and the sergeant as an escort, and cross the river with our prisoner after nightfall, travelling along the opposite shore until we reach Orleans. What think you, lieutenant?"

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"'Tis you who command here," he answered with apathy, "not I."

"Nevertheless, do you not think the plan a safe one, as well as one that will allay His Eminence's very natural impatience?"

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"Oh, it is safe enough, I doubt not," he replied coldly.

"Your enthusiasm determines me," quoth I, with an irony that made him wince. "And we will follow the plan, since you agree with me touching its excellence. But keep the matter to yourself until an hour or so after sunset."

He bowed, so utterly my dupe that I could have laughed at him. Then,

"There is a little matter that I would mention," he said. "Mademoiselle de Canaples has expressed a wish to accompany her father to Paris, and has asked me whether this will be permitted her."

My heart leapt. Surely the gods fought on my side.

"I cannot permit it," I answered icily.

"Monsieur, you are pitiless," he protested, in a tone of indignation, for which I could gladly have embraced him.

I feigned to ponder.

"The matter needs consideration. Tell Mademoiselle that I will discuss it with her at noon, if she will condescend to await me on the terrace. I will then give her my definite reply. And now, lieutenant, let us breakfast."

As completely as I had duped Montrésor did I presently dupe those of the troopers with whom I came in contact, among others the sergeant, and anon the Chevalier himself.

From the brief interview that I had with him I discovered that whilst he but vaguely suspected me to be St. Auban—and when I say, "he suspected me," I mean he suspected him whose place I had taken—he was nevertheless aware of the profit which his captor, whoever he might be, derived from this business. It soon grew clear to me from what he said that St. Auban had mocked him with it whilst concealing his identity; that he had told him how he had obtained from Malpertuis the treasonable letter, and of the bargain which it had enabled him to strike with Mazarin. I did not long remain in his company, and deeming the time not yet ripe for disclosures, I said little in answer to his lengthy tirades, which had, I guessed, been made for scope to trap me into betraying the identity he suspected.

It wanted a few minutes to noon as I left the room in which the old nobleman was confined, and by the door of which a trooper was stationed, musket on shoulder. With every pulse a-throbbing at the thought of my approaching interview with Mademoiselle, I made my way below and out into the bright sunshine, the soldiers I chanced to meet saluting as I passed them.

On the terrace I found Mademoiselle already awaiting me. She was standing, as often I had seen her stand, with her back turned towards me and her elbows resting upon the balustrade. But as my step sounded behind her, she turned, and stood gazing at me with a face so grief-stricken and pale, that I longed to unmask and set her torturing fears at rest. I doffed my hat, and greeted her with a silent bow, which she contemptuously disregarded.

"My lieutenant tells me, Mademoiselle," said I in my counterfeited voice, "that it is your desire to bear Monsieur your father company upon this journey of his to Paris?"

"With your permission, sir," she answered, in a choking voice.

"It is a matter for consideration, Mademoiselle," I pursued. "There are in it many features that may have escaped you, and which I shall discuss with you if you will honour me by stepping into the garden below."

"Why will not the terrace serve?"

"Because I may have that to say which I would not have overheard."

She knit her brows and stared at me as though she would penetrate the black silk that hid my face. At last she shrugged her shoulders, and letting her arms fall to her side in a gesture of helplessness and resignation, "So be it; I will go with you," was all she said.

Side by side we went down the steps as a pair of lovers might have gone, save that her face was drawn and white, and that her eyes looked straight before her, and never once, until we reached the gravel path below, at her companion. Side by side we walked along one of the rose-bordered alleys, until at length I stopped.

"Mademoiselle," I said, speaking in the natural tones of that good-for-naught Gaston de Luynes, "I have already decided, and you have my permission to accompany your father."

At the sound of my voice she started, and with her left hand clutching at the region of her heart she stood, her head thrust forward, and on her face the look of one who is confronted with some awful doubt. That look was brief, however, and swift to replace it was one of hideous revelation.

"In Heaven's name, who are you?" she cried in accents that bespoke internal agony.

"Already you have guessed it, Mademoiselle," I answered, and I would have added that which should have brought comfort to her distraught mind when,

"*You!*" she gasped in a voice of profound horror. "*You!* You the Judas who has sold my father to the Cardinal for a paltry share in our estates! And I believed that mask of yours to hide the face of St. Auban!"

Her words froze me into a stony mass of insensibility. There was no logic in my attitude; I see it now. Appearances were all against me, and her belief was no more than justified. I overlooked all this, and instead of wasting time to recount how I came to be there, and thus deliver her from the anguish that was torturing her, I stood, dumb and cruel, cut to the quick by her scorn and suspicions that I was capable of such a thing as she imputed, and listening to the dictates of an empty pride that prompted me to make her pay full penalty.

"Oh, God pity me!" she wailed. "Have you naught to say?"

Still I maintained my mad, resentful silence. And presently, as one who muses, "*You!*" she said again. "You whom I—" She stopped short. "Oh! The shame of it!" she moaned.

Reason at last came uppermost, and as in my mind I completed her broken sentence, my heart gave a great throb, and I was thawed to a gentler purpose.

"Mademoiselle!" I exclaimed.

But even as I spoke she turned, and sweeping aside her gown that it might not touch me, she moved rapidly towards the steps we had but descended. Full of remorse I sprang after her.

"Mademoiselle! Hear me!" I cried, and put forth my hand to stay her.

Thereat she wheeled round and faced me, a blaze of fury in her grey eyes.

"Dare not to touch me!" she panted. "You thief! You hound!"

I recoiled, and like one turned to stone I stood and watched her mount the steps, my feelings swaying violently 'twixt anger and sorrow. Then my eye fell upon Montrésor standing on the topmost step, and on his face there was a sneering, insolent smile which told me that he had heard the epithets she had bestowed upon me.

Albeit I sought that day another interview with Yvonne, I did not gain it, and so I was forced to sun myself in solitude upon the terrace. But I cherished for my consolation that broken sentence of hers, whereby I read that the coldness which she had evinced for me before I left Canaples had but been assumed.

(To be concluded.)

[In the next number of *Short Stories* will begin a serial romance of powerful human interest, entitled "Link by Link." It is a story of to-day—a story of modern love and hate, grief and joy, crime and passion. From the first line to the close of the story you will be held spellbound. Do not fail to secure a copy of *Short Stories* next week.]

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STRANGE MENTAL POWERS.

HOW PEOPLE ARE INFLUENCED.

Startling Words from the Committee Appointed to Investigate Hypnotism for the Benefit of Journal Readers.

REV. PAUL WELLER, Gorham, N.Y.

G. S. LINCOLN, M.D., 101 Crutchfield Street, Dallas, Tex.

F. H. STOUFER, Sec. & Treas. of Railway Conductors, Pueblo, Col.

JUDGE HENRY SCHAFER, Flemington, N.J.

Hypnotism is no longer a myth, a fanciful creation of the mind, but a reality, a most potent power capable of producing infinite good For the purpose of ascertaining the exact value of this much-talked-of power, a committee, composed of a physician, a well-known jurist, a prominent minister and a leading railroad man, was appointed to investigate Hypnotism.

The committee carried on a series of investigations in regard to the power of hypnotism to influence the actions and deeds of people in the everyday walks of life.

The first step taken by the members of the committee was to master the science in every detail, so that they might state from personal experience the good or evil this strange power might produce. They wrote the New York Institute of Science, of Rochester, N. Y., the greatest school of Hypnotism and Occult Science in the world, and received full and complete instructions in regard to how hypnotism may be used to influence people in business, how to use it in treating diseases, etc., etc. In a few days they mastered these instructions and were full-fledged hypnotists.

It was clearly demonstrated that hypnotism may be employed so that the person operated upon is entirely unconscious of the fact that he is being influenced; and, all things considered, the committee regard it as the most valuable discovery of modern times. A knowledge of it is essential to one's success in life and well-being in society.

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Judge Schafer, although a legal light, turned his attention to healing the sick, and in a few treatments he completely cured John E. Myers, of Flemington, N.J., of a strange malady that had kept him bedfast for nine years, and which the doctors said must surely kill him. Judge Schafer's fame spread for miles around, and hundreds of people applied to him for treatment.

Mr. Stoufer performed the astonishing feat of hypnotising Mr. Cuningham, of Pueblo, Col., at a distance of several blocks. He also hypnotised an aged gentleman and had him run through the streets shouting, "Redhot peanuts for sale." Mr. Stoufer says it is indispensable to one's business success.

Rev. Paul Weller says that every minister and every mother should understand hypnotism for the benefit they can be to those with whom they are brought in daily contact.

In speaking of this marvellous power, President Eliot, of Harvard College, said to the graduates: "Young gentlemen, there is a subtle power lying latent in each of you, which few of you have developed, but which, when developed, might make a man irresistible. It is called Personal Magnetism or Hypnotism. I advise you to master it."

The New York Institute of Science has just issued 10,000 copies of a book which fully explains all the secrets of this marvellous power, and gives explicit directions for becoming a practical hypnotist, so that you can employ the force without the knowledge of anyone. Anybody can learn. Success is guaranteed.

The book also contains a full report of the members of the committee. It will be sent absolutely free to anyone who is interested. A penny postal card will bring it. Write to-day. Address:

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Her First Engagement.

Of all the hopeful English girls in Milan who had reached the close of their term of preparation for the operatic stage that year, none gave such small promise of success—so the others whispered—as a certain little maid from Devonshire, by name Bettina Langdon. The croakers were obliged to own that she had beauty, but her voice and temperament! Horrors! No impresario could think of engaging her. And yet Bettina was the very first of the lot to get an engagement. It came about this wise—all in the springtime.

Most of the girls studied with old San Donino, a wily snuff-taking master of music, who, it cannot be denied, knew much about training the human voice. But he was a master as well in the art of making English girls who came to Italy to study, believe that they were born for the stage, and if they only took lessons of him—it was merely a matter of time (and money)—when they should embitter the existence of Nordica, Eames, Calvé, or any other great star that might be glittering in the firmament. So there was seldom an hour of the day when his rather shabby little studio—two flights up on the rear court, in Via Brera—did not sound with the voices of his "victims," as the sculptors and painters on the floor above used to call the girls.

Near the studio, its broad porte-cochère opening on the pavement of Via Brera, stood the palace of the Duke of Loduoli—a stately pile, grey with its centuries of age. The old nobleman, who had once served Italy in a diplomatic post at St. James', was fond of the society of the Britishers, and was often seen at their colony's evening parties. It was his delight now and then to have San Donino bring his English girls to the palace to assist at a *musicale* or a *conversazione*.

It was on one of these evenings at the palace that Bettina met the impresario who gave her her first engagement. Among the glided youth of Milan who made up part of the company was the duke's elder son, Prince Francesco, a wide-awake aristocrat who forgot to pose, and who travelled everywhere. He was fond of practising his English, and he talked to Bettina of his tour in the British Isles, and made her laugh by saying that the thing he liked best was a song he had heard in London about one little girl who didn't want to play in another little girl's garden, as he put it. Bettina had often sung the ditty in her schooldays—she thought of it sadly—and the words and tune began to run in her head. This happened while the master was showing off his pupils. One after another they had taken their places at the piano while he accompanied them in arias from the operas in which they dreamt some day of singing the leading *rôles*; and one after another they had been rewarded with the polite applause of the company. At length it became Bettina's turn. In a low voice she spoke to the maestro while he opened a sheet of music and placed it on the ledge.

"I shall not sing that," she said.

"What!" San Donino swung round on the stool and stared at her in amazement, a spot of snuff on the tip of his nose. He met the calm gaze of Bettina. "What you sing, then?" he said, somewhat meekly.

"Listen, and you will hear."

Then while the maestro sat open-mouthed at the silent piano she began the simple strain of "I Don't Want to Play in Your Yard." She sang in the sweet artless manner of her early girlhood, free from the studied mouthings and breathings that often make the vocal scholar ridiculous, and in a voice as pure as nature. It was a strange piece to sing to an Italian company, but everyone listened in delight. This time the applause was not merely polite. It rang with genuine feeling and mingling cries of "Brava!" and "Ancora!" though only the Duke and his son understood the words.

"You sang like an angel of Heaven," Prince Francesco whispered as he took her into the supper of coloured sweets that the Italians like even more than coloured pastry and sparkling red wine of Asti that they love so dearly. "And you sang it for me," he breathed, looking into her eyes.

"It pleased me as well," she said, and he felt that her meaning was free of self-conceit. "I seemed to be at home again in England singing—a little girl again in the days when mother was alive."

They met the next afternoon in the Victor Emmanuel Arcade, where he had waited two hours for her to pass. They walked to the cathedral in the piazza, and he showed her a chapel that his ancestors had built four hundred years ago. She told him of a poor little churchyard in a Devonshire town, and of a girl who came to Italy to study music that she might make her own way in the world.

In a few days it had grown to be their custom to walk together from the music studio. Once they were passing the porte-cochère of his father's palace. Spring was in its full flush, and plants bloomed on the balconies of Via Brera, and she spoke of their beauty.

"Will you come into our garden?" he asked. Through the arch of the portico she could see the wealth of greenery. "Come, I will show you some flowers." Side by side they walked through the grounds, under canopies of gorgeous magnolias, beside fragrant oleanders and sparkling fountains and urns of blossoming glory.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" was all that she could say.

"Yes," he said passionately; "but not so beautiful as you are to me. Bettina, I love you. Some day this yard will be mine. Will you come and play in it?"

For a moment they regarded one another silently, he holding her hand, and then both gave way to joyous mirth.

"I want you for my princess," said her impresario, and Bettina's first and last engagement was sealed then and there.

H. W. Thomas.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

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If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 55—60," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, March 10th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 55. LOST WORDS.

Fill in the blanks of the following lines with a word of seven letters, using the same letters, transposed, each time:

That merciless —— was hurled at you,
At you, a proud ——, of Dons the chief.
No wonder you were —— when you knew
It might —— a mind both calm and true
Let's feel ——; that may be some relief.

No. 56. WORD SQUARE.

Form a word square from equivalents of the following: A disease; pertaining to a heavenly body; a fruit; a bird; a place of public exertion.

No. 57. PROVERB MAKING.

The following letters, rearranged, constitute a well-known proverb:

AA C EEE FF HH IIIII M NN OOO P RR SS TTTTT.

No. 58. TRANSPOSED SENTENCES.

The following words when rearranged will form two sentences, one of eighteen words, the other of thirty:

From a splendid clear ceiling at two edged from invisible lamp masked by a black head hanging above a linen veil of blue vestments steady in burnt priest with her golden brows with eyeholes a flame shaven white suspended the altar of the end stood in his either.

No. 59. CHARADE.

My FIRST is void of ornament,
With artfulness unfilled:
You'll find me in the forest,
And also view me tilled.

A SECOND of good spirits
Some people take in tea;
But do not have a SECOND
If you can't discover me.

My WHOLE now, if you wish to be,
Sue someone, say, for cash,
Tho' mind I don't advise you
To be so very rash.

No. 60. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

Initials and finals of equivalents of the following give names of two English cities: A deadly plant; a wild evergreen shrub; to condemn; a fish; a fruit; a servant.

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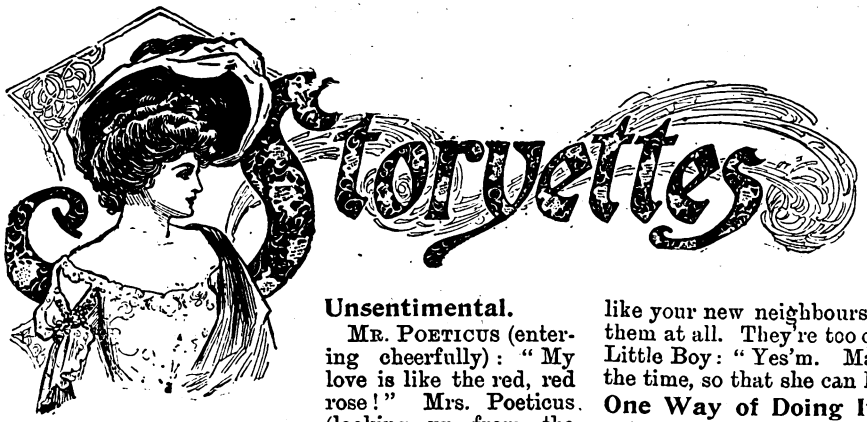

Unsentimental.

Mr. Poeticus (entering cheerfully): "My love is like the red, red rose!" Mrs. Poeticus (looking up from the stove): "You'd look red, too, you lazy scribbler, if you'd been bending over a frying-pan for twenty minutes!"

She'd Had a Good Time.

Maid: "Gentleman wishes to see you, mum, Here's his card." Miss Flirtie: "Um—I don't remember that name." "He said, mum, that you was to see him, or else give him something of his you had." "It must be someone I met at the seaside last summer. Take that box of rings, and ask him to pick out his."

Why he was Dirty.

Benevolent Lady: "I can pity your hunger, my poor man, and I am willing to relieve your wants, but why do you keep yourself so dirty? There is plenty of water about." Tramp: "Fact is, marm, my physician told me to take a bath two hours after my meals, and I ain't had a meal for a fortnight, and—thank you kindly, marm."

A Hero's Death.

Inspector: "Now, boys, can any of you tell me the names of any Englishmen who have died whilst bravely doing their duty?" First Boy: "General Gordon, sir." Inspector: "Very good, my boy, but" (looking round the classroom) "surely he was not the only one." Second Boy: "My father, sir." Inspector: "Oh, indeed, what was he?" Second Boy (proudly): "A referee at football matches, sir."

No Desire to Corrupt.

Old Tightpurse: "Mr. Timmings, is it true that you remarked at a recent meeting of the Young Men's Society that 'Money is a curse and the root of all evil'?" Mr. Timmings (his employé): "Yes, sir." Old Tightpurse: "That being the case, Mr. Timmings, and your views on the subject being so sincere, I have no desire to pervert your noble nature by forcing you to take the rise of salary I had intended giving you. Good morning."

Bringing the Wick Up.

The other day a lady in the West-end sent her servant to light the gas. Being a long time gone, she went to find her. She found her in the hall on top of a pair of steps picking the burner with a pin. "What on earth are you doing?" asked the lady. "Shure, Oi'm bringing the wick up," was the reply. On being told that there was no wick, and all that was required was a lighted match, she replied: "Go 'long wid yer! Oi may look a bit ignorant, but, begorra, Oi'm not so silly as to put a loight to a piece of cold iron!"

The Poor Martyr!

"The time has come," said Mr. M'Brick's wife, "when woman may forsake the light, ephemeral things of life and take up the heavy subjects." And her husband rejoined, wearily: "Are you going to make bread at home again, Maria?"

They Were Too Quiet.

Visitor: "How do you like your new neighbours?" Little Boy: "I don't like them at all. They're too quiet." Visitor: "Too quiet?" Little Boy: "Yes'm. Mamma makes me keep still all the time, so that she can hear what they're doing."

One Way of Doing It.

Sweet Girl: "Papa, I wish you'd lock up your money and pretend to fail; there's a good old dear. It needn't last more than a week or two, and there are so many failures now no one will find fault." Father: "Of all things! Wha——" Sweet Girl: "Oh, it's all right. You see, I'm engaged to nine young men, and I've got to get rid of at least eight of them, somehow."

All He Got.

"I never robbed a man but once," said the honest tramp, "and then I was starving. He would not give me a penny, and I couldn't stand the gnawing in my stomach any longer. So I knocked him down and went through his pockets. What kind of a haul did I make? Just one little bottle which read on the label: 'Pepsin'; for that full feeling after eating.'"

A Triumph of Art.

"There is one very dramatic situation in my new play. It is where the mortgage on the old farm is foreclosed and the hero can't pay it off." "Does it affect the audience very much?" "Oh, my! Why, last night a millionaire in one of the boxes was so affected that he wrote out a cheque for £5,000, and sent it up to pay off the mortgage and get the hero out of difficulties."

Didn't Want the Spring.

A London exquisite, having become agriculturally ambitious, went into the country in search of a farm, and, finding one for sale, began to bargain for it. The seller mentioned, as one of the farm's recommendations, that it had a very cold spring on it. "Ah, aw!" said the fop, "I won't take it, then, for I've heard that a cold spring ruined the crops last year, and I don't want a place with such a drawback upon it."

"Having" the Policeman.

A police-inspector, being informed that a restaurateur was serving game out of season, visits the restaurant in plain clothes and orders dinner. "Waiter, pheasant for one." The inspector finishes his dinner leisurely, and then says to the waiter: "Ask the governor to step this way a minute, if you please." "What for?" "I wish to notify him to appear in court to-morrow and answer for selling pheasant out of season. I am the police-inspector, and have secured the necessary evidence against him." "It wasn't pheasant you had." Police-inspector (uneasily): "It wasn't pheasant? What was it, then?" Waiter (cheerfully): "Crow."

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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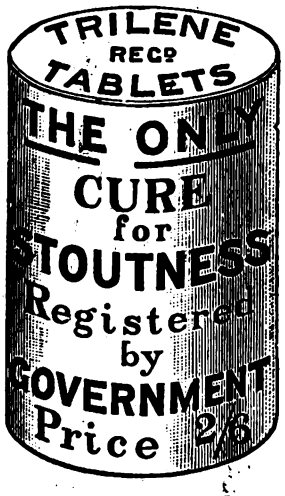

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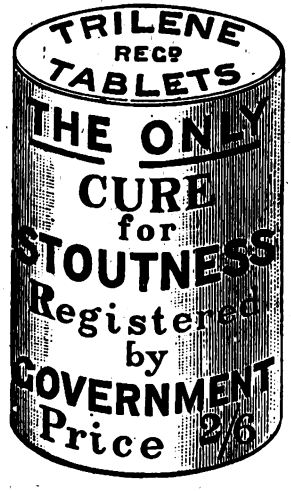

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Bucklegh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

Mrs. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stookport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lance., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 12st. 6lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago: they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

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But notwithstanding the gigantic sale of over **SIX MILLION BOXES PER ANNUM,** there are still thousands of sufferers who are spoiling their lives, and possibly ruining their health, with experiments, while the old-established remedy, **BEECHAM'S PILLS,** remains still untried. Note the axiom on the top of this page—"A friend's recommendation is the best testimonial"—and remember that in the case of **BEECHAM'S PILLS** this is an easy thing to obtain.

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No. 688.) For Week Ending March 8th. 1902. (One Penny.

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Chickering] [Boston.

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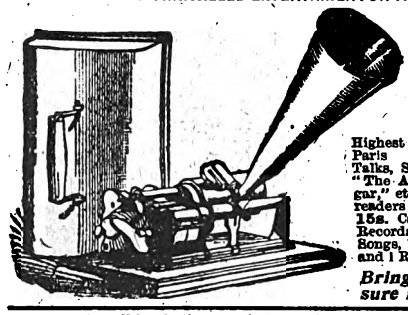

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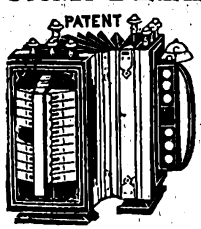

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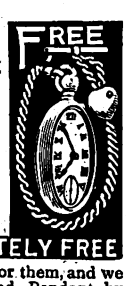

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

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SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Princess Liechtenstein writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent tablets directly." Mr. Canham, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned." Mrs. H. Cox, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The Tablets reduced me 1½ stone." Mrs. S. Alexander, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They reduced me 28lb., and I am cured." Mrs. Darnley-Smith, of Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, says: "Tablets have reduced me very much." Mrs. Crossley, of Rose Hill, Torver, Comston, says: "I weigh much less and can breathe so much easier; I am delighted."

SHORT STORIES.

No. 688.] For the Week Ending March 8th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

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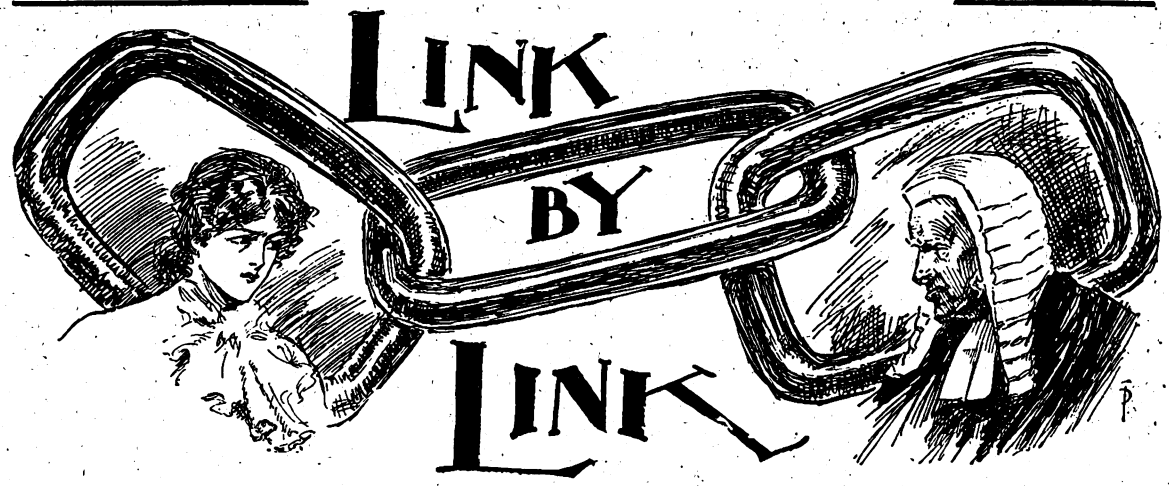

CHAPTER I.

A Strange Meeting and an Escape.

"GOOD-NIGHT, porter!"

"Good-night, sir!"

The big gate of Moulstone Asylum closed with a dull clang as Gerald Mortimer strode out into the road leading to Moulstone village. It was late. Dinner with his friend Dr. Branksome and one or two others of the asylum medical staff had killed the evening hours enjoyably, and the doctor's well-selected whisky and cigars had served to prolong the merry meeting to almost midnight.

At the Manor House a mile and a half away—beyond the village—Mrs. Mortimer and the rest of the household would have retired by now, and so Gerald swung leisurely along. The night was fine, lit by the moon and countless stars, and in spite of a crispness born of a January frost, the air was pleasant and exhilarating.

All around him the country spread like a huge, elongated dish, he surveying it from the vantage ground of a sloping rim. Typical Kentish country, hills and valleys, with hedgerows trailing through fields like velvet ribbons, and the little river Kel winding in the moonlight like a silver serpent among the low-lying meadows. Here and there in the valley a spot of yellow light showed where a household kept late vigil, while ahead, some three miles, a rising glow located the massed lamps of Kelbridge, the nearest town.

The phrases of a sweet melody from Faust ran through Gerald's brain as he traversed the long white road that led from the asylum, and his lips formed themselves for a low whistle.

But his whistling and his walk were both suddenly arrested.

From a point at the roadside where the tall, thick-set hedge was broken by a gate guarding a cart-track across a common, there issued an apparition! Or if not an apparition, a figure that suggested one.

The figure of a woman, tall and gaunt, dressed in a long cloak of faded blue, with eyes that seemed to burn dully like live coals growing cool. Swiftly she came with a lithe, gliding movement, right to the middle of the road, and as she moved, Gerald Mortimer could see those weird eyes of hers moving restlessly in their distended sockets. His sense of startled wonderment gave place to one of pity as he noticed her face, white and drawn with suffering.

Fearlessly she approached, right in his path. He stopped, waiting! She placed her hands upon his shoulders and peered at his face so closely, that he could feel her breath upon his cheek, and see those dull red eyes within a few inches of his.

As she thus gazed the woman's tongue found utterance—half-moan, half-whispered words.

Gerald Mortimer gently removed her hands from his shoulders. The hands were deathly cold.

"I beg your pardon, madam," he said. "But what do you want?"

The woman looked at him a moment and shrank back.

"Not you," she said, again with that strange moaning sound, "not you. I thought you were—— But he has not come. He will come! I must wait—wait."

She shivered again, and made as if to return to her resting place by the gate.

"What is it?" he asked kindly. "Who is it you are expecting?"

Once more she turned her dull-red eyes upon her questioner. Then she went on, unheeding his question.

"He will come—he may be here presently, and if not to-night, why then to-morrow. I must wait—wait always."

The thought had come to Gerald that this poor creature was demented, perhaps had escaped from the asylum, though that was hardly possible, since his friend Dr. Branksome would surely have mentioned it.

"You cannot wait here," he said; "it is nearly midnight, and you are cold and weary. Come with me to my mother's house till the morning."

She shrank further from him, and almost shrieked:

"No, no, no! My place is here. I must wait."

"But you will be better for a rest," he urged. "Come with me!"

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Her mood demanded silence and solitude, and she did not reply. Instead she swung round with sudden quickness and passed through the gate on to the common beyond. Then at a pace that surprised Gerald Mortimer, she sped along the cart-track.

Irresolute, Gerald gazed after her, his brain in conflict with itself. He had no right to detain this woman, and yet—she was in distress! What if she were demented, as she certainly seemed? In such an event harm might easily come to her alone and uncontrolled, in that lonely by-way. He must try once more to persuade her.

He pushed open the gate. The track dipped and rose among the furze of the common. The flutter of the woman's cloak among the undulations met his eye for a second. He started in pursuit. But she was too far ahead. A wood, thick with brown ferns and dying undergrowth loomed ahead. He saw that cloaked form stop for a moment at the edge; there was a bobbing appearance as of a jump across a narrow ditch, and then he saw her no more. The wood had swallowed her up.

Gerald raced to the border of the wood. But the tangled brambles defied his sight. No sign of life could he see. He listened for the snapping of a twig that might furnish a clue to the woman's whereabouts, but no sound reached his ear save the soft and melancholy sighing of the wind. He skirted the wood each way for a hundred yards, listening and peering at every few paces. But eyes and ears were still defied. The wood seemed dead.

Reluctantly he retraced his steps, pursuit being useless. He regained the wood and strode homewards. And even now, whenever an odd sound struck upon his ear, he would catch his breath and turn round to listen and look back along the road he had traversed.

His walk to the Manor House was beset with those conditions of melancholy solitude in which the imagination ever finds the freest play. His brain whirled with strange fancies in which there always appeared the cloaked woman with the wondrous eyes. And even after he had ascended to his room and had got into bed, the haunting vision of those eyes of fire pursued him through a series of eerie dreams.

* * * * *

At breakfast the next morning he was taciturn and depressed. The memory of his encounter with the strange woman, trivial as seemed its direct import to him, rested on his mind like a dead weight, and left him with a gloomy foreboding of future evil. Vague enough his apprehensions were, and unfounded when his reason examined them, but like most others of us, Gerald sometimes had moments when instinct superseded and ruled reason. This was one of them. To his mother and young sisters, who, with himself, comprised the widowed household, he spoke scarcely a word beyond the usual formalities during breakfast.

Even towards the slight, fair girl with the beautiful hair and violet eyes, who sat quietly conversing with the little Mortimer girls, whose governess she was, he showed a disinclination to talk. Which was strange, for, during the few weeks that Nina Penhurst had been in the house, he had shown a desire to look upon her and talk to her on every possible occasion. So much so that already the tongues of the gossips were busy in the kitchen and village, and the opinion that the "handsome Gerald Mortimer" and "beautiful Miss Penhurst" would make a match of it, generally held. An opinion, which had Gerald been the only one to consult, might have been speedily proved. But of that more anon.

Meantime, he sat silent and preoccupied, eating very little breakfast. But even as they entered upon the marmalade stage, the parlourmaid appeared.

Excitement could be read in Mary's face, and her hurried words to Mrs. Mortimer bore out the reading.

"If you please, ma'am, Danvers has just brought the news that one of the lunatics has escaped from the asylum."

Gerald sprang from his chair.

"Lunatic escaped! When did it happen?" There was a ring of almost fierceness in his demand.

"Last night, sir, so Danvers says, but he wasn't missed till this morning."

"*He*—it's a man then. Why did you say it was a woman?" Gerald was quite irritable.

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied the maid. "I'm sure I didn't know I'd said such a thing."

"No, Gerald," said Mrs. Mortimer, turning to her son in surprise. "Mary said nothing about its being a woman."

"I'm sorry," Gerald said hurriedly. "It was my mistake." He flushed as he mentally traced to its source the cause of his supposition that the escaped lunatic was a woman.

Breakfast was practically finished, and he covered his obvious confusion by rising and excusing himself.

"I should like to see Danvers," he explained. "I was with Dr. Branksome last night, you know, and he knew nothing about it then. The escape must have occurred after that."

His thoughts were in a fresh turmoil as he sought out Danvers, the under-gardener. Somehow he could not detach the news of the escape from his encounter with that woman of the previous night. In some mysterious manner the two things were connected. Of that he felt convinced. But in what way?

The gardener could help him little towards the answer to that question. Danvers had only heard, as he passed the lodge gates, the bare news that a man had escaped in the night, and that search parties were being organised.

"That's all I knows about it, sir," the gardener concluded. "But no doubt they can tell you more up at the 'sylum."

To the asylum Gerald at once made his way.

"Yes, it's perfectly true, Mortimer," replied Dr. Branksome, whom Gerald had promptly sought out. "A man has escaped, and the warders are scouring the neighbourhood for him now."

"Is it a dangerous case?" Gerald asked.

"No: and that's the extraordinary part of the business. This man, Felix Cordelvin, was one of the quietest patients here. He never gave any trouble, and was the last person in the world I should have expected to bolt."

"Is he young or old?"

"Oldish—nearly sixty. He's as sane as you or I on most things, but labours under the delusion that Felix isn't his name. Thinks it's Anthony Cordelvin, and imagines he has been done out of a lot of property in the past."

"Any grounds for his delusion?"

"None at all. But you seem very interested, Mortimer."

"Do I?" replied Gerald. "Well, perhaps I am. When I first heard of this escape I thought it was a woman."

"A woman? What suggested such a possibility?"

"An adventure I had last night."

"Last night! But you were here till nearly twelve."

"Yes, I know. It was after that."

"You pique my curiosity."

"Well, I'll gratify it." And in a few words, Gerald told Dr. Branksome of his encounter of the previous night.

"She was a woman of about fifty," he concluded, "and was evidently expecting somebody. Isn't it possible that she was in some way connected with Cordelvin?"

"It's possible, of course, though I never heard of the escaped man having any friends. However, if the men

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fail to find Cordelvin it may be necessary for you to inform the police. Your adventure was certainly a singular one. It is hardly usual to find a lady roaming about alone at midnight."

Gerald Mortimer left his friend soon after that and returned home.

That load which had been upon his mind since the previous night was still there—that strange foreboding of evil seemed rather to grow with the hours.

But it lightened when, on entering the garden at the rear of the Manor House, he caught sight of Nina Penhurst. The sight of that girlish figure and beautiful face arrested his wandering thoughts and quickened his heart. Manifest admiration was in his glance as he approached, and into his brain there rushed an almost overwhelming desire to speak the thoughts that were in his heart. But so far she had never given him sufficient indication that such a declaration would be acceptable, and so, smothering his inclination, he simply raised his hat with a polite salutation.

She smiled as he approached.

"I have just been to the asylum," he said.

Her face became grave.

"Ah, yes," she returned; "to inquire after that poor man? Is there any fresh news?"

"Very little. He escaped very late last night or early this morning. The warders are now hunting the neighbourhood. It is to be hoped that the poor old man has not thrown himself in the river."

Nina shivered compassionately and nodded her head slowly.

"He is an old man, then?" she inquired.

"Yes; nearly sixty, Dr. Branksome tells me. A strange old man without friends, who imagines himself to be the rightful owner of property which, so far as anybody knows, has no existence outside his own imagination."

"Not an uncommon delusion, I believe," Nina suggested.

"No," Gerald answered. "Such a thing is, of course, quite prevalent among lunatics. But in this case the poor fellow supports his idea by declaring himself to be somebody else."

"That surely is also a common symptom of madness, is it not?" inquired Nina. "I have heard that people in asylums often declare themselves to be kings and queens."

"That is so," Gerald assented. "In this case, however, the claimed identity is the stranger because of its trifling difference from his own. His name is Felix—whereas he claims to be Anthony."

"Felix—Anthony—he thinks his name is Anthony—Anthony what?"

"Cordelvin—Anthony Cordelvin."

Nina Penhurst looked up quickly as Gerald Mortimer uttered the name. Then she made as though to step forward. Her lips formed for speech, but she could utter no word. Her beautiful eyes changed in a moment their look of clear intelligence for one of awesome vacancy. She swayed where she stood—swayed to the left and the right. A moment more and she would have fallen, but Gerald Mortimer stepped to her side just in time to catch her as, her senses leaving her, she fell forward in a dead swoon.

CHAPTER II.

Dr. Ephraim Manisty is Offered a £1,000 Fee.

It was twelve o'clock midnight, and very cold. The church of St. Mary, Whitechapel, boomed out the hour in slow, sonorous tones. At the same time, a swiftly-driven hansom from the City direction turned to the half-right, and rattled over the stones along the Commercial Road.

The lamp inside the cab was extinguished; but a close scrutiny, as the vehicle whirled past the yellow shafts of light from the gas-standards, would have revealed a mysterious-looking figure inside. A man's figure, tall, and broad of shoulder, and with a massive head covered with an iron-grey mop of hair, which, with the heavy beard, and the closely-buttoned coat-collar, suggested an attempt at disguise.

She placed her hands upon his shoulders and peered at his face closely.

Two long, thick fingers lifted the trap in the roof of the cab, and a staccato direction in deep, bass tones, passed clear-cut through to the driver.

"Cannon Street Road—first on the right—drive to Ratcliff Highway—then look out for Stevedore Street on the left."

"Right, sir!" and the driver flicked his horse.

A hansom in Ratcliff Highway (or High Street, Ratcliff, as it is called in these days) was not so common a sight as to pass unnoticed. Men and women staggering along the street, or lounging at tavern doors, paused to look at the vehicle inquiringly, and even menacingly, as it flashed past. But no untoward incident occurred, and the cab turned duly into Stevedore Street.

Half-way down the street, on the right-hand side, was a long, low window, the glass of which was ruby-coloured, while a lamp over the door shed rays of the same hue over the narrow road.

A brass plate announced that

DR. EPHRAIM MANISTY, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

lived there; while the stencilled inscription on the red window, "Advice and Medicine, Sixpence," betokened the social status of the doctor's patients. In a poor neighbourhood, medical fees must inevitably rule low;

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and, after all, a doctor's income is not of necessity commensurate with his ability. But among poor practices, Dr. Ephraim Manisty's was of the poorest.

That could be seen at a glance. The low, tumble-down house that seemed to huddle against its neighbours for support; the feebly-illumined windows, with their shabby blinds of cheap muslin; the rusty door-knocker; the dilapidated bell—all pointed to the poverty-stricken condition of the tenant.

The man in the cab alighted as soon as the vehicle stopped. He knocked at the door. There was a pause of about a minute, and then an uncertain step was heard in the passage. The door was opened by a man of about fifty—shabby, like the house, and dissolute-looking. It was the "sixpenny" doctor himself. Surprised at the sight of a well-dressed stranger, he was silent for a second.

Then the visitor said:

"I wish to consult Dr. Manisty."

The doctor indicated with a slow thumb pointed at himself, that he was the identical man, and led the way to the surgery. The interior of the house was even more grimy and poverty-stricken than the outside.

The doctor signed to his visitor to sit down, and at the same moment endeavoured to secrete a glass and a half-empty whisky-bottle, to which, it was evident from his condition, he had been paying attention just previously. The visitor observed the movement.

"Don't let me interrupt you, Dr. Manisty," he said. "Your profession must be a terribly trying one, and you doubtless find a little whisky an excellent sedative after a hard day's work. And now let me tell you I have come to seek your professional assistance."

"What's the matter with you?" queried the doctor, a little puzzled by the other's manner. "Why have you come to me?"

"One question at a time, doctor. It is not for myself that I want medical attention. But let me tell you in my own way. My name is—Causton. Yours, I believe, is Ephraim Manisty?"

The doctor bowed.

"Poor neighbourhood for your profession here—not an over-lucrative clientèle, eh?"

"Really," resented the doctor, trying to straighten himself, while a vestige of pride glimmered in his bleared eyes, "I don't see what this has to do with your visit."

"Pardon me," returned Mr. Causton, with a smile in which his mouth looked ugly, even under the protecting beard and moustache, "if I delay a few moments in making the connection clear. You *haven't* a very profitable lot of patients, have you now?" There was a strange mastery in his manner that compelled the other to curb his indignation.

"Well," replied the doctor, somewhat sullenly, "if it will satisfy you to know, I haven't."

"Thank you, doctor. Candour is as charming as it is rare. You *haven't*. And, therefore, if I offer you a thousand pounds as a fee——"

Dr. Manisty started.

"A thousand pounds!" he gasped.

"Kindly allow me to proceed. I repeat, if I offer you a thousand pounds as a fee, you will be ready to attend a friend of mine?"

"A thousand pounds!" the doctor said—and there was a strange light in his eye—"why, it would mean my salvation, and my wife's and children's. I haven't five pounds in the world. I would do anything for a thousand pounds—that is, almost anything."

"Even to certifying a man with heart disease as a 'first-class life' for a British Oak Insurance policy, eh?" Mr. Causton's eyes held a peculiar smile.

The other leapt to his feet.

"What do you mean?" he cried vehemently. "Have you come here to insult me? Who are you? Are you from Scotland Yard?" He looked half-scared, half-threatening.

"Calm yourself, doctor," the visitor remarked imperturbably. "You need not fear me. I am in no way connected with the police. Nor do I wish to insult you—unless the offer of a thousand pounds is likely to hurt your feelings. No, Dr. Manisty, I'm here in the best of good faith, only as we are to do business together, I wish you to know that I am acquainted with your antecedents."

The doctor groaned.

"Is it necessary to go into that?" he asked.

"Not at all—at any length," Mr. Causton answered, with a species of sardonic cheerfulness. "The mere mention of the fact that five years in Portland Prison doesn't seem to have improved your worldly prospects is sufficient."

"It is magnanimous of you to omit the details," retorted Dr. Manisty, bitterly. "But I suppose it is the penalty of crime to always have one's past recalled."

"Not at all, not at all. I am merely making sure that you are the man I want. We can now, I think, forget the past, and talk of the present and the future. A thousand pounds is a good fee?"

"A very good fee."

"Even for a Harley Street surgeon?"

"That is so."

"You will do what I want for that sum?"

"What *do* you want?"

"An operation performed on a friend of mine."

"An operation? Of what nature?"

"The amputation of an arm."

"What is wrong with the arm?"

"That you will see."

"But who is the patient—and where is he—and when is it to be done? You will give me some particulars?"

"The patient is, as I have said, a friend of mine. He is at present at Streatham. The operation must be performed at once—you must come with me now."

"But I want to know——" Dr. Manisty began.

"The other particulars are here," grimly rejoined Mr. Causton, pulling a bundle of crisp bank-notes from his breast-pocket; and he rustled them temptingly under the doctor's sight.

The latter's eyes glinted greedily. He paced the room.

"You won't give me further information?" he said, facing round.

"Is not the eloquence of these sufficient?" giving the notes another rustling shake. "I will give you one note for a hundred now, as a guarantee, and the remainder after the job is done. Will you come with me?"

"I don't know what to say," hesitated Dr. Manisty. "Yours is a peculiar request made in a peculiar way. I don't know what to think. In view of my past experiences, I don't want to run any risks."

"There are no risks. Come—you are poor—you have said so—you have a wife and children—and here's a chance of making a thousand pounds. You'll come with me?"

Dr. Manisty was pacing the room, his fuddled brain trying to think things out clearly. His visitor eyed him carefully as he poured out a glass of raw whisky and drank it off at a gulp.

"Yes!" the doctor exclaimed, with sudden determination. "I'll come with you! One hundred pounds down, you said?"

"Here it is—and now let us lose no more time."

Quickly Dr. Manisty collected a few drugs, bandages, and instruments, locked the bank-notes safely away in a drawer, and turned down the light.

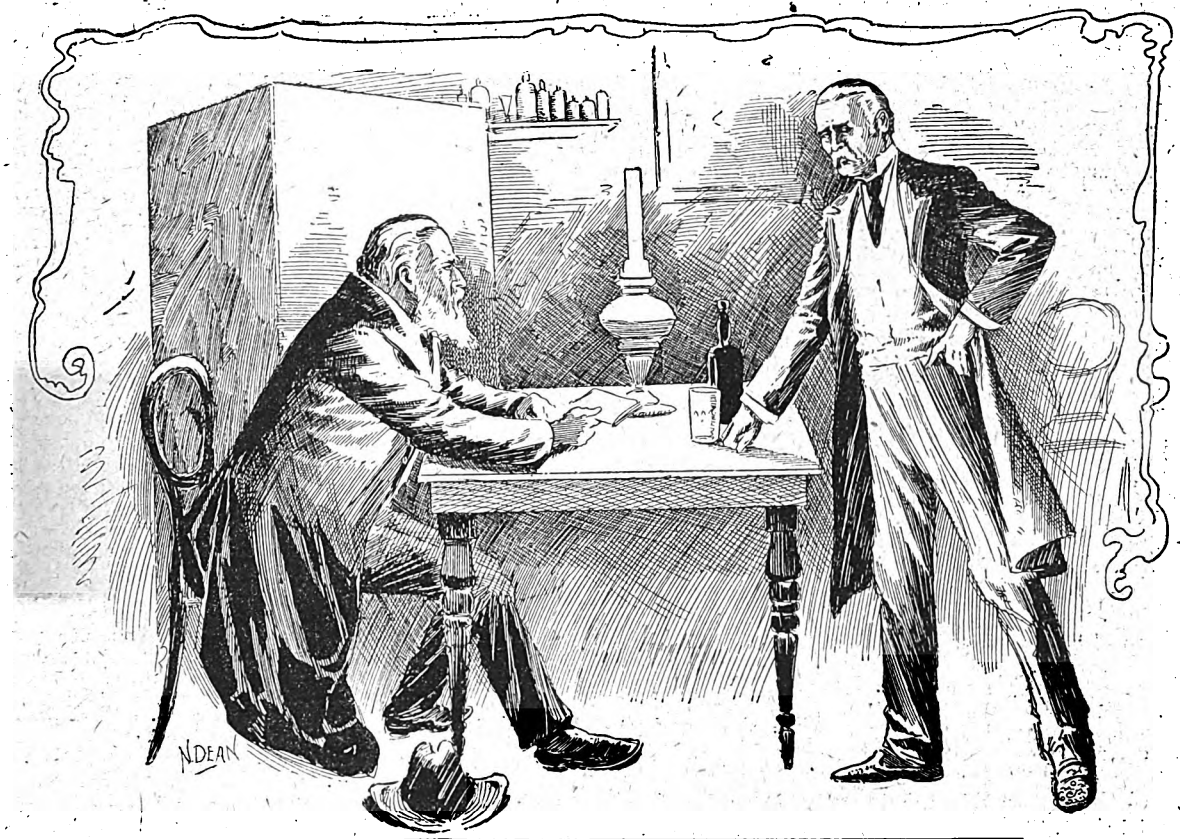
"I'm ready now!" he said.

The doctor led the way to the door. As he opened it, a soft sound as of someone moving away fell on their ears—a sound as of rustling skirts.

"What was that?" asked Mr. Causton.

"I don't know—probably some poor outcast resting on the step," replied Dr. Manisty.

They got into the cab, which had been waiting near a coffee-stall at the corner of the street. But neither noticed a tall, gaunt figure, clothed in a faded dark-blue cloak, hiding in the shadows of the houses. Nor did they know, as they rattled quickly back towards the City, that fifty yards behind them was another cab, with the same weird figure for its occupant. Yet there it was, the woman reclining in the vehicle, but with her head thrust eagerly forward, and a pair of strange-coloured eyes that seemed to gleam in the dark like a



"Come, you are poor, you have said so, you have a wife and children, and here's a chance of making a thousand pounds."

tigress', riveted on the rear-lights of the cab in front—steadfast and unblinking.

On through the almost deserted streets of the City, where the echoing hoofs cleft the silence of the night; over London Bridge, beneath which the murky water lapped its doleful dirge and reflected a myriad lights like swords of living flame; through the dark, depressing Borough, into the comparative light and freshness of Kennington and Brixton. On, on; up Brixton Hill towards Streatham, and then, suddenly, the first cab turns sharply to the left, along a houseless road, flanked on one side with old elms and a long wall.

"Pull up!" The deep tones of Mr. Causton convey the order, and the vehicle stops.

The two men alight, and dismiss the cabman. Mr. Causton takes from his pocket a bunch of keys that jingle softly, fits one into the keyhole of a little gate in the wall, which he pushes open quickly. They pass through, and the gate is silently closed behind them. Before them rise the frowning walls of an old house, standing dark and silent as a forest pool, in its own extensive grounds. They walk on beneath the black shadows of the giant elms, which softly moan like lost spirits as the breeze stirs their boughs. Then, without a word, the two men pass into the house by a back door. Their journey is over.

And all through that journey, the rearmost cab has followed in their wake. The woman in the dark cloak has sat immovable throughout, her eyes for ever fixed on the cab ahead. When the latter stops, she stops too, and dismisses her driver. From a distance she watches the two men pass through the gate in the wall; and then, drawing her cloak tightly round her, she flits like a spectre towards the spot where they have disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

Dr. Manisty Performs his Task.

The house into which the two men had passed was a rambling, grey structure. Although of only one storey, its lofty rooms and sloping roofs prevented any suggestion of squatness, while its ample doors and windows, and its solid walls, gave it an appearance of dignity that could not fail to impress the casual observer.

To the nostrils of Dr. Manisty and his guide, there

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rose, as they entered the broad stone passage that led to the kitchen, that strange, musty smell of nothingness which ever pervades a house lacking occupants. The bare appearance of the place, as displayed by the feeble light of wax matches which Mr. Causton struck on entering, bore out the suggestion of vacancy.

They reached the kitchen, a large, stone-paved place, and Mr. Causton lighted a lamp standing on the long dresser. An ordinary kitchen table and two or three chairs completed the furniture, but a bright log fire in the big, old-time grate sent out a grateful warmth, and prevented any feeling of desolation. But although suffering no physical discomfort, Dr. Manisty could not forbear glancing suspiciously round the almost empty apartment.

"Ah, doctor!" remarked Mr. Causton, at length breaking the silence, "you are wondering where you are. This place, as you doubtless gather, is the kitchen."

"I see—I see it is!" Ephraim Manisty responded huskily. His manner was that of a man engaged in a task about which he was uncertain. "Is the house empty?" he added with a quick, interrogatory glance round.

"Ordinarily—yes. At the moment—no. Besides ourselves my son is here, and—and your patient." Mr. Causton emphasised the last words strangely, and shot a keen glance at the doctor.

Ephraim Manisty shivered, in spite of the fire. His eyes roved round, and his hands twitched nervously as he replied:

"Ah, yes; my patient! Where is he?"

"You shall see him presently. Meantime you will have some refreshment."

Mr. Causton drew out from a cupboard a spirit tantalus, remarking as he did so:

"It's picnic style, I'm afraid, doctor. But we have no womenkind here, and you must excuse it. What will you take?"

Dr. Manisty indicated the whisky, and Mr. Causton poured him out half-a-tumbler. He himself took a little plain soda-water.

"And now, doctor," observed Mr. Causton, after Ephraim Manisty had taken two glasses of neat spirit, "you will be anxious to begin work."

Dr. Manisty rose unsteadily.

"I am ready!" he replied huskily.

"Good! then please come with me."

Out of the kitchen they passed, and along a short corridor. Then up four steps into what apparently was the hall. The carpetless oak floor echoed dully to their tread. At the sound, a door on the left opened. A head peered cautiously out.

"All right, Stephen!" Mr. Causton said in an undertone. "I have returned." Then a trifle louder, "My son, this is Dr. Ephraim Manisty."

The latter gazed unsteadily at the young man to whom he had been thus introduced, and bowed. Stephen Causton, with a suspicious glance, returned the bow.

"How is the patient, Stephen?" inquired Mr. Causton.

"Asleep!" returned the other. "He has been sleeping for the past hour."

"That's all the better. Come, doctor!"

Mr. Causton led the way into the room. There was a carpet here and a couple of comfortable armchairs drawn up close to the fire. Upon a table in the middle of the room was a lamp, turned low, and with a large red shade. Against the further wall stood an ancient four-post bed, hidden by curtains closely drawn. In the silence the regular breathing of a sleeping man could be heard.

Beckoning the doctor, Mr. Causton tip-toed to the bedside and drew back the curtains cautiously. Upon the bed, in a sound sleep, lay an old man. His hair was grey, and his face deeply lined. His arms lay outside the coverlet.

"This is your patient," Mr. Causton whispered.

Ephraim Manisty nodded.

"What do you want me to do?" he inquired.

Mr. Causton's eyes gleamed angrily.

"I have already told you," he said testily. "I want you to amputate his left arm."

"But there is nothing the matter with it," retorted the doctor, "It is quite sound—see!" He rolled back the sleeper's sleeve as he spoke. The sleeper half-turned and moaned.

"Hush!" said the elder Causton, "you will wake him and spoil all. Come away; I will talk to you in the kitchen."

He signalled with his eyes to his son, and once more led the way to the kitchen. Upon his face was a look of grim determination.

"Dr. Manisty!" he demanded, facing round. "Am I to infer that you are going to raise obstacles?"

"There is nothing the matter with the man's arm," Manisty said doggedly. "Why do you wish me to amputate it?"

"I am not going to discuss the matter further than to say because I do."

"Somewhat of a *woman's* reason, isn't it?"

"No; a determined man's." Causton looked at the other in a way that made the doctor quail. But, low as Manisty had sunk, he had still a minute spark of manhood in him. He pulled himself together, passing a hand over his throbbing head.

"Supposing I refuse to do what you wish?" he retorted.

"Then," said Causton, his eyes flashing, "you will never do anything else!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you will never leave this house alive."

"What? You threaten me? I care nothing for your idle threats. You have tricked me into coming to this house." There was defiance now in the hitherto spiritless doctor. Causton regarded him coolly for a moment. Then, without the slightest perturbation, he drew from his pocket a revolver, and said calmly:

"That my threats are not idle this little weapon will prove. As regards *tricking* you, your contention is false. I made a specific bargain with you in your own house."

"But you didn't tell me that the man was quite well."

Mr. Causton waved his hand impatiently.

"I am not going to discuss the matter further," he said, and in his strange calmness there was sterner argument than any outburst of passion could have conveyed. "Let me state your position clearly. You undertook a task for which I offered to pay you one thousand pounds, and clinched the bargain by accepting a hundred on account. Complete the task, and you leave this house richer by nine hundred pounds. On the other hand, if you refuse, the circumstances of the case leave me no alternative but to kill you. No, no," he went on, observing the convulsive clenching of the doctor's fists, "it won't be of the slightest use your resisting. We are two to one," indicating his son, who stood in the background, "and we are armed. This house, as you have probably observed, is a secluded one, and any cries you may utter will have no chance of reaching the outer world. Now, what are you going to do?"

Dr. Manisty hesitated. He readily saw now that he was in grievous peril. If he refused to do this man's bidding, death stared him in the face. On the other hand, if he carried out the arrangement, he would gain a thousand pounds. Eyeing him carefully, Causton observed his wavering.

"Come, come," he encouraged. "You weren't so scrupulous about that British Oak insurance policy in the old days, you know. And in this case the risk is infinitesimal; besides, there's the thousand——"

"I'll do it!" Ephraim Manisty blurted the words out.

The man with the revolver said drily:

"I thought you would."

They returned to the bedroom. Dr. Manisty opened his case of instruments, keenly watched by the other two. A faint, sweet odour as of apples wafted through the room, and even while the man in the bed remained sleeping, the doctor administered chloroform. Its effects speedily became apparent. The breathing of the man in bed became slow, laboured, and stertorous; his pulse quickened. His face went pale and cold, and the whole muscular system relaxed.

A sound as of scratching on the curtained window caused the doctor to swerve round.

"What was that?" he asked. His manner and speech betokened a state of high nervous tension.

"It was merely the brushing of a branch against the window outside," replied the elder Causton. "Go on!"

There were no more interruptions. The doctor completed his task, and put away his instruments. As he snapped the case to, there came once more upon his ears that strange sound on the window.

"Someone is there!" the doctor cried hoarsely. "A spy, perhaps!" He dashed towards the window, snatched back the heavy red curtains, and pressed his face against the pane. But nothing met his sight except the drowsy movement of skeleton trees as they waved and moaned in the breeze.

"It was your fancy, doctor!" remarked Causton. "You are excited, and need sleep. Will you stay here till daylight? We can put you up."

"No, no," replied Ephraim Manisty, "I won't stay here. I will go now. I have been here long enough." He shuddered as he spoke. Causton had taken out his pocket-book, and the rustling of bank-notes was heard from his hand.

Miss Penhurst found herself suddenly confronted by Gerald Mortimer.

"Very well, as you will!" he rejoined. "Here, Dr. Manisty, is the conclusion of our bargain—nine notes of a hundred pounds each."

He passed the notes to the doctor as he spoke. The latter clutched them quickly, and thrust them into his pocket without even counting them. In a low voice he gave instructions as to the treatment of the sleeping man.

Two minutes later he had left the house. His grim task was done. In his pocket was his reward. But there was still a dull weight upon his brain that made him cast his eyes to the ground. And through his fevered mind there ran in endless repetition the query: "Where will this end? Where will this end?"

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CHAPTER IV.

The Discovery in the Castle Ruins.

Breakfast at Moulstone Manor was an early institution. Even in winter the household rose betimes, while yet the sun appeared as a red ball of mist upon the eastern horizon, and the air was at its purest.

Thus it happened that, at eight o'clock on a morning divided from the memorable escape from the neighbouring asylum by about a week, Nina Penhurst, the governess, invited the younger Mortimer children who were her charges, to go for a walk.

"The day is so fine," she remarked to Mrs. Mortimer, "that I think it would be far better for the children to be in the air than shut up in the schoolroom."

"I'm quite sure it would, my dear," responded Mrs. Mortimer. "And better for you too. You are quite pale still. Indeed, since that fainting fit of yours the other day, you have not looked yourself at all."

"Oh, but I'm feeling very well now," Nina rejoined. "And to faint as I did was a stupid thing to do when there was no reason for doing it."

"Oh, but there *was* a reason, my dear child. Gerald was to blame entirely for talking to you about that unfortunate man who escaped from the asylum. Men are so brutal in speaking about these things. However, it's past now, and it's no use talking. Which way are you going to walk?"

"To the ruins, I think," Nina returned. "Gladys is so fond of them."

"Yes mamma," chimed in Gladys, a pretty little maid of ten. "Miss Penhurst knows everything about the ruins, and tells us such lovely tales of the knights and barons who used to live there."

"Well, Gladys, mind you profit by them, and you, Harold, be sure and not get into the moat; the water's very deep there, you know, at this time of year."

The road to Moulstone Castle, of which the mouldering ruins alone stood now as a rambling, grey memorial to the old Norman fortress, lay for a distance in the direction of the asylum. By mere coincidence was it that Nina Penhurst and the two children turned off at the very path by which the strange woman in the blue cloak had sped away from Gerald Mortimer on that eventful night recently. Across the hard, frost-bound land they walked, skirting the wood and emerging on the bank of the little river Kel, which flowed lazily in summer, but blithely enough now that the rains of winter had swollen it, along the bottom of the sloping wood.

Before them as they turned to the right rose the old ruins a quarter of a mile away. They had stood originally upon an eminence in one connected and symmetrical pile, but landslip after landslip had wrenched the foundations out of place till its appearance had become what it was now—a central tower surrounded by rough, grey, moss-grown walls, tilted at all imaginable angles, and looking for all the world like up-rooted trees.

It was among these crumbling walls, which, with undergrowth and creepers hanging from their sloping summits, formed innumerable caverns, that the Penhurst children loved to play. It was their delight to run from the side of their governess and hide from her, and she, entering into the spirit of juvenility, indulged them in their harmless pastime.

No sooner had they come within fifty yards of the outer walls than Master Harold and Miss Gladys set off at a great pace, shouting behind them as they ran, a request to their governess to try and find them.

Miss Penhurst, walking slowly on to give them time to conceal themselves, turned presently round the angle of a wall, and found herself suddenly confronted by—Gerald Mortimer.

Nina flushed a little as she bowed, and he raised his hat. Then a moment later she went pale again.

"Are you sorry to see me?" he asked gently.

She looked up quickly with a faint smile.

"Sorry," she repeated, "why of course not—why should I be?"

He fixed his eyes upon her face for one moment, then averted them.

"Why should you be?" he echoed, swinging the end of his stick against the hard ground. He himself was a trifle pale now, as he continued: "Of course there's no reason why you should be sorry to see me, is there?"

She looked up wonderingly. The words he had spoken puzzled her, not in themselves, but in the way he uttered them. But she only answered again:

"Of course not."

"And there's no reason why you should be glad either, is there?" He hazarded a quick glance at her again. She dropped her eyes and flushed once more. For a moment she knew not how to answer, but then she said:

"Really, Mr. Mortimer, I—but there, I'm forgetting all about the children. I promised to play hide and seek with them," And she made as though to move away.

But a restraining hand laid tenderly on her arm by Gerald held her back.

"No, don't go yet. Ni—Miss Penhurst. You can play with the children any time, and I want to speak to you now."

The softness of his touch upon her arm, the tenderness of his tone, and the earnestness of his face kept her motionless and silent. Her heart fluttered as she stood there, not daring to look up at him, or, indeed, anywhere, save on the ground.

"I have something to say to you," he went on, and there was a suspicion of a quaver in his deep voice which betrayed a great effort to control his emotion, "which is of more importance to me than anything else in the whole world. Miss Penhurst—Nina, I want to tell you that I love you, that——"

"Mr. Mortimer! you must not!"

"I loved you when I first saw you," he went on vehemently, unheeding her gasped interruption, "and since then my love has grown and grown till my whole heart and being is dominated by this one desire, that you will be my wife. Nina, say you will; don't keep me in——"

"Mr. Mortimer!"—she was trembling violently now—"you must not ask me. I ought not to have listened so long to you, but now that it is said, I can only beg of you never to revert to the subject again."

"But, Nina," he burst out again, unmindful of her disapproving look when he again used her Christian name, "you cannot mean what you say. I love you as man never loved a woman before, and I have thought that you— But no, you cannot mean what you say."

Nina turned her head away, incapable of witnessing his distress. But within her was a stern sense of duty which no compassion, no inclination to spare his feelings, must oppose. She brushed away hastily the tears that would bedew her eyes, forced back the lump that rose persistently in her throat, and spoke again.

"You must not—must not talk to me of—of these things."

"But why? Are you already——?"

"No, no," she broke in, divining what he would say, "there is no other man——"

"Then perhaps some day—you will let me hope?"

He looked eagerly at her, right into her eyes. Mournfully she shook her head.

"I must not deceive you," she said, in slow, sorrowful accents. "We are friends now; we can never be more. Ah! do not ask me to explain. There are reasons, good and sufficient, why, whatever my feelings may be towards you, I should never marry you."

"Whatever your feelings may be towards me!" he

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repeated. Then, unable to withstand further the great impulse of his heart, he stepped forward and took her in his arms. "Nina, Nina, my darling! Then you do love me. Say that you do!" and he kissed her passionately as he held her.

Whatever reply Nina Penhurst might have given at that moment was destined never to be uttered. For even as Gerald Mortimer held her in his arms, and bent down, waiting for her answering words, there suddenly broke upon their ears a cry.

A startled cry; the cry of a boy who shrank before some fearsome thing, and yet was spell-bound by it.

"What was that?" Nina released herself and listened for its repetition. Gerald was listening too. "It was Harold's voice. Ah! there it is again. It comes from the other side of the ruins. He is hurt, or in danger. We must go to him!"

But Gerald has dashed off already, and is nearing the source of the repeated cry. From the top of a knoll, he catches sight of his young brother, deep down in a grass-grown pit which an old landslip has formed. Little Harold is running to and fro, wringing his hands in terror, shrieking for Miss Penhurst, and ever and anon casting fearful glances into an ivy-grown hole, over which a section of wall hangs and forms a sort of cave.

In less time than it takes to write, Gerald is with him.

"What is it, Harold? What is the matter?"

"In there, see, in there. Oh! horrible!"

The boy's eyes and trembling hands point the way, and fearlessly Gerald steps forward, kicking the ivy aside as he advances. But he suddenly checks himself, and almost totters back, an affrighted cry upon his lips smothered with difficulty, as soon as instinct sends it there.

Irresolute he stands for a moment, with horror in his eyes. Then a questioning call comes to him from Nina, who is approaching, and stirs him to immediate action. He snatches at the ivy which grew all around, and piles it over the affrighting *something*. Then he steps out of the cave, seizes Harold in his arms, and hastens to meet Nina Penhurst.

"You mustn't tell Miss Penhurst what you have seen," he whispers hoarsely to the boy. "You mustn't tell her, do you hear, Harold?" And Harold hears, and is obedient.

Nina herself is too agitated by the memory of Gerald's recent words to put questions, and a specious reason is given by Gerald to account for Harold's cries. There is no suggestion to remain any longer, and Gladys approaching from the other side of the ruins at that moment, a start is made for home.

It is a silent little party as they return, and whatever talk there is, is by little Gladys, who alone has encountered no experience to numb her tongue. At the junction of the field path with the road, Gerald halts, and at length breaks the silence. He addresses Nina:

"I am going up to the asylum," he says, with an effort to be calm; "I want to see Dr. Branksome. Don't wait lunch. Possibly I may not be back." He lowers his tone and adds: "I will speak to you again to-night." Then he turns to his young brother with a whispered injunction:

"Mind, Harold, not a word about what you saw—not a word till I return home, you understand."

A second later and he is gone. For fifty yards he walks at his normal pace, for for that distance they whom he has just left can see him. But a bend of the lane hides him from sight, and he starts to run as though for dear life. Breathless, he reaches the asylum gates, and the porter, who knows him, admits him without question, but with wonder in his eyes at Gerald's haste. His intimacy with Dr. Branksome is close enough to render announcement unnecessary, and in a short space of time he bursts into the doctor's room.

"Branksome!" he gasps.

"Why, what's up, Mortimer? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Perhaps I have. I have just found a dead man!"

"Good Heavens, man! Where?"

"Under a wall in the ruins of Moulstone Castle. It is an old man dressed in asylum clothes."

"Asylum clothes—then it's Cordelvin, who escaped last week."

"Yes; that is what I thought. His face is somewhat disfigured, and he has only one arm!"

"One arm—but Cordelvin had two—I don't understand."

"There is evidently some mystery here. I didn't examine him closely. I had no time, as I will explain to you later, but his left arm seemed to have been amputated."

The doctor looked on with breathless interest. He turned to the wall and rang a bell.

"There *is* a mystery—a strange mystery," he said to Gerald. Then to the servant who appeared he added:

"Tell Beasley to get a stretcher party ready immediately to accompany me to the Castle ruins."

A little later Beasley and three other warders, bearing a stretcher between them, were on their way with Gerald Mortimer and Dr. Branksome to the fateful spot.

(To be continued.)

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WOOING BY COMPACT.

How Francis Carleton Saved his Honour.

FRANCIS CARLETON woke with a headache; he turned from the glare of the midday sun, which had filtered through the lace draperies at his window, and rang the bell for his valet.

"Williams, what time it it?"

"'Alf after twelve, Mr. Francis, sir; breakfast will be ready in five minutes, sir."

"Hang breakfast! I was drunk last night wasn't I?" Williams coughed diffidently, behind a deprecating hand. Carleton sat up in bed and seized his pillow.

"Give me a straight answer or I'll chuck it," he threatened.

"Well, sir, per'aps as 'ow it wasn't last night, as one might say." He caught the flying pillow dexterously, without a change of countenance, and placed it upon a far-distant chair. Carelton had no more pillows; Williams had decidedly the advantage.

"Was I, or was I not, drunk at three of the clock this morning?" persisted Carleton.

"You was, sir," said Williams, driven to the wall.

"Williams," said his master, knitting his brows, "you are dismissed."

Williams bowed. "Will you get up, sir, or 'ave your coffee 'ere?" Williams had often been dismissed under like conditions.

"I mean what I say," said Francis Carleton, thrusting his feet into his slippers and his form into the costly dressing gown that Williams handed him. "I'm broke, Williams, utterly broke, and you're out of a job." Williams smiled. He had often heard that cant, and went on methodically laying out Carleton's immaculate morning toilet. An electric tinkle rent the air. Carleton started, it was so loud and peremptory. Williams answered it and brought back a card.

"Philippe Durano, ahem! we must dress at once; give him the morning papers, and make him comfortable in the library. He may join me at breakfast—or stay—we will call it luncheon, Williams. I have breakfasted long ago—years ago, I think," and Carleton plunged his handsome fair head into a basin of cold water. A quarter of an hour later he was shaking hands with a round-faced, chubby little man, while Williams brought in a small table as a preliminary to luncheon.

"You'll join me of course, Durano," said Carleton, "and we'll talk business over a bottle of your own old Burgundy, for I presume you've come to talk business."

"Yes—partly—I may say quite on business," said Durano, evidently ill at ease.

"Oh, well—well—we can settle all difficulties, I dare say; have a cigar while you wait," and Carleton dashed into bright and chatty talk of himself and his special circle—items in which he knew his visitor took an absorbing interest. The two men ate heartily, and when Williams had retreated Carleton passed the Burgundy and demanded:

"Now, Durano."

"I've come to the end of my tether; I cannot supply you any longer, Mr. Carleton."

"Indeed! What is the matter? Has your establishment gone to smash? Too bad! Is there anything I can do, old man?" Durano smiled; the situation was superbly ironical. Carleton smiled, too, somewhat lamely.

"Of course, I understand," he said, "you want some sort of a settlement, and I don't blame you in the least; but, I say, Durano, you are too much of a gentleman to press me now. I'm pledged for at least half a dozen more entertainments this season, and you surely won't forsake me."

"Not if you will allow me to receipt this," and Durano pushed a bill of large dimensions across the table; Carleton stared at it like one fascinated.

"I can't do it. I am living up to every penny of my income, and the governor has positively refused to advance another farthing. Have pity, my dear fellow you see before you the heir to millions—and a bankrupt." Durano shrugged his shoulders—the last trace left of his French extraction; in all else he was thoroughly English.

"I cannot be put off any longer—I have been very lenient."

"A regular brick," declared Carleton, hiding his quaking heart beneath a genial smile.

"I know what young fellows are; I sowed my own wild oats before I became a gentleman caterer." Carleton groaned in spirit—if only Durano would cut that!

"I didn't rise from head cook, I can tell you; I'd lowered my social standing when I began to make money."

"It doesn't raise one socially to lose it," sighed Carleton; "it's one of those instances where extremes meet; I like to shake hands and cry quits."

"So would I—perhaps we may—but I want you to understand that I don't bank on your prospects."

"Heaven forbid!"

"As I said," pursued Durano, sipping his Burgundy reflectively, "my business has hurt me socially, but I've made a great fortune—I could retire to-morrow if I chose, but I must be sure of regaining my old position—at least for Adrienne's sake."

"Adrienne—your daughter?"

"Yes—all that is left me besides my money."

"I did not know——" began Carleton.

"No, assuredly not, my Adrienne is far too fine a jewel to be flashed before all eyes. She has been educated abroad. This is her first winter at home."

"By Jove!" laughed Carleton. "Durano with a pretty daughter! I'll tell the fellows the next time we meet what a sly old boy you are!"

Durano pushed back his chair and faced his host threateningly. "I had a motive, Francis Carleton, in mentioning my daughter's name to you; that name is

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above reproach and must be held as sacred in your midst as the names of your sisters and sweethearts."

The little man looked several inches taller as he stood over Carleton, with flashing eyes, but he cooled down the next moment and took his seat again.

"I beg your pardon," said Carleton meekly.

Durano accepted the apology graciously. "There is a way out of your dilemma," he began after a pause. "I have but one proposition—you may accept or decline; it seems to me however that you should consider it seriously."

"Well——" said Carleton, leaning forward eagerly.

"My daughter is very handsome," pursued Durano, "She is cultured and refined, she has been accustomed always to the very best." He paused again.

"She has a good father," put in Carleton, to fill up the gap.

"I have great ambitions for her, she must marry among the best."

"Ah!" Carleton straightened up suddenly, but he could not afford to be angry just at that moment.

"I see," he remarked quietly. Durano breathed a sigh of relief.

"I'm glad I make my meaning clear, but I must speak even more plainly. I do not think, as you now stand, that you are an eligible *parti*."

"Hardly." Carleton smiled in spite of himself.

"You've been leading a gay life and are fathoms in debt, principally to me."

"Exactly."

"Suppers, dinners, luncheons, even breakfasts of the most elaborate description."

"Which you have itemised, no doubt."

"Assuredly, at the same time, you are on the social plane where I would like to place my Adrienne, stretch out your hand to her—and you owe me nothing."

Carleton broke into a nervous laugh. "My dear fellow, do you really mean what you say?"

"I do—see, I give you both sides of the picture—a continuation of this easy bachelor life, in these luxurious rooms, with every comfort about you, capped by a marriage, in every way a worldly triumph, or——"

Carleton put up both hands. "Don't give me the other side," he implored. "Look here, Durano, I'll be frank with you, I'm perfectly heart whole, I have yet to love a woman better than a horse—I'm not speaking of family ties, naturally they are born in one—but the love that leads to the altar and all that sort of thing, you know, has never gripped me. Now, as you are aware, my tastes are democratic, still I've never thought of looking for a mate out of my own sphere—I don't know if your sphere or mine is on top—that's neither here nor there. I'm not bragging about mine, but it's a ticklish business going out of doors when you're sought after at home."

"How if they knew about the debts?" suggested Durano.

"'All would be up with poor little Robin'—no papa-in law would have me, I seriously doubt if I'd have more than a bowing acquaintance with my own respected parent."

"Then consider——"

"Oh, I do—I'm considering past consideration—why, if you do not think me an eligible *parti*, do you thrust me on your daughter?"

"For reasons it is needless to state again. I do not wish to thrust you on my daughter, or her on you, I wish you to visit her as you visit young women of your own set—judge her by your own standards, as she will judge you by hers—the only difference will be, that you will come as a suitor— she being untrammelled."

"She is a woman; therefore to be wooed—
She is a woman, therefore to be won."

quoted Carleton softly. "Well, old man, it's a novel sort of scheme, if I go in seriously for this, you'll set me free, if I propose matrimony in due form, of course, how if she refuses me?"

"You will have done what you could—it would be your misfortune, and I can be generous, money is not my object. You are practically free from the day you ask Adrienne to marry you."

"It's a compact, then," said Carleton. "How long do you give me?"

"Six months."

"She'll never have me," was the young fellow's confident thought, "she's one of those beautiful creatures with high ideals." Aloud he asked:

"When shall we meet?"

"Dine with me on Monday," said Durano.

The Duranos lived at Richmond, and the house—built on a high elevation—faced a broad bend in the beautiful river.

The door was opened by a man in livery, who took his coat in quite the ordinary way, and Carleton was ushered into a beautiful drawing-room. His quick eye had scarcely time to take in the priceless simplicity and beauty of the whole when his host joined him, and presently there was a soft sound—which could scarcely be called a rustle—of trailing skirts, and a vision paused for a moment on the threshold.

A tall girl dressed in some soft, silky fabric of a deep yellow hue, came gracefully forward, in acknowledgment of her father's introduction. Carleton stared at her almost stupidly at first. Durano's daughter was certainly not what his fancy had painted; this queenly young woman with her olive complexion, her finely-chiselled features, her glorious eyes, her heavy coils of glossy black hair—was something to strike awe into his soul, she looked as if she had stepped from the frame of some old Venetian portrait, for her gown was somewhat mediæval in style, and the yellow rose worn in the low coiffure might have been a love token.

She seemed to fill the room with a rich, warm presence. Carleton forgot where he was—and how he came to be there—and he watched her admiringly as she presided at the perfectly appointed dinner, while Durano watched him, well satisfied at the way the affair was progressing.

Adrienne must have thought their guest unusually silent and hard to entertain—in reality, Carleton was enjoying a recreation not common among the men of his set, he was castle building, and having mentally ejected Monsieur Durano from his seat at this festive board, he and his hostess were dining alone, as a newly married pair should dine; she wore the yellow gown because he had first seen her in yellow, and the rose—why, he had given it to her, and she had gently kissed it before putting it in her hair; and those hands, moving so daintily, had he not kissed them over and over—were they not his to kiss whenever he wished?

"Are you fond of horses, Mr. Carleton?" she asked for the second time, her eyes full of suppressed laughter. Carleton roused himself, and his castle tumbled down like a house of cards.

"Horses? Ah, you've touched my weakest spot. And I've lost enough money in that quarter to buy a couple of racers."

"I don't wonder!" she exclaimed, sympathetically. "I went once to the Grand Prix at Paris, and I lost m

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head as well as a fat little capital I'd taken with me to use discreetly. Since then I've not been tempted to go to a race, but I love to ride and my own horse is a beauty, a black, slim creature, and swift as a bird."

"Perhaps you'll let me join you occasionally, I can always get a mount, and I know the roads so well I would certainly prove an excellent guide."

She accepted his offer with evident pleasure.

"You cannot tell what a boon you are bestowing," she said gratefully, "one cannot enjoy and discuss nature with one's groom, and the out-of-door life tempts me so often, to the exclusion of other duties. I'm afraid," with a smile, "I will never make a conventional society woman, I'm too fond of my freedom."

Carleton nodded approvingly. "That's right, stay where you are, Miss Durano, the society woman would not be your sort—too much striving and straining."

"For what?" asked Adrienne, turning to him.

"For one thing—position; they all want to be first."

"And then?"

"Well, there's a grave problem which always confronts them—how to satisfy 'a champagne appetite on a beer income'—to use a trite phrase—very serious, I assure you. I've tried such mental arithmetic myself—it's—it's dispiriting—it sinks one's ideals—it brings one face to face with such depressing reality."

Adrienne looked at him critically. "You don't bear any scars," she said.

"Because I've been keeping up the champagne diet, regardless of consequences; sometimes consequences come home to roost."

He threw just a little pathos into his tone, and his handsome face looked so grave, that Adrienne smiled with added friendliness and Durano almost chuckled over his wine. Carleton was moving things quickly.

On the young man's part he tried not to think of the odious compact to which he owed the birth of this new friendship; this girl with the wonderful eyes, her sweet voice, her indescribable grace, had all unconsciously cast a spell about him. He had meant to go a-courting in a calm, deliberate manner, to propose in due form, accept his inevitable rejection stoically, and Monsieur Durano's receipted bill with well-concealed triumph.

But now what a difference! He only remembered that he was young, and that she was young and beautiful and that life and love were for such as they; and she saw the love in his eyes and liked the numberless unspoken tokens which marked his intercourse with her.

Williams' position became somewhat of a sinecure; regular hours marked his master's rising and retiring, the days were spent in active, healthful exercise, and Williams grew sleek and fat from regular living. No more champagne suppers, no more carousals at the club, all of which signs Williams accepted with the stolid indifference of his order. But when it came to rising betimes of a Sunday, and making devout preparation for church, and tenderly nursing a great bunch of violets, which was certainly not intended for a boutonnière—then, as Williams stood at the window and watched the athletic young figure go swinging down the street, he put up a discreet hand—and smiled behind it.

As for Adrienne, she was woman enough to see that something beyond a mere desire to be agreeable brought the young man so often to her father's house, and, womanlike, she could not help rejoicing over the power she had to draw him away from the great world, about which her father talked so constantly.

The allotted time was fast approaching and Carleton had not yet spoken.

Once he came dangerously near it when they were riding together in a narrow bridle path, the groom far behind and she close to him—so temptingly close, but he was man enough to stifle the longing, perhaps he was not so sure of himself and of her as he had been when Durano and he had hatched their little scheme. At any rate, he looked far from happy, on a certain morning, when he was admitted into Durano's private office. Durano eyed him keenly, but said nothing beyond the usual greeting—he well knew the cause of this visit; the period of probation was over, but he was willing to allow for the hesitation of the real lover, which Francis Carleton had proved himself to be.

"You noticed, perhaps," remarked Carleton, plunging characteristically into the midst of things, "that I have failed to fulfil my part of that very remarkable treaty we made six months ago."

"Oh, yes—yes—but I'm in no hurry — take your time—a few days, more or less, will make no difference—I can see you are in earnest."

"In such deadly earnest that I altogether refuse to make the deal. No—hear me first—I will not so insult the woman I love as to buy her at any price, and I will owe her father no debt when I ask Adrienne to marry me. I must look once into those clear eyes without feeling like a cur, and there is but one way."

"And what will you do, my friend?" Durano asked

"Work."

"So? You can break stones then?" sarcastically.

"No, but I can read law. I am to enter an office next week."

"Good, you have energy."

"I needed the incentive. See here, Durano, I've not kept the compact. I must pay the forfeit, but I won't go to my father. Can you wait for me?"

Durano stretched out his hand.

"I'd cancel the whole affair if I did not know my man so well. It is not the money I want, Carleton. I've told you that before."

"It is your daughter I want, and I'm going to have her, Heaven helping me," and Carleton gripped the proffered hand, and strode to the door.

"Amen," said Durano, when he found himself alone.

Carleton went home and wrote to his father a short non-committal letter, as he thought, telling of his plans and his desire to settle down and give his life a practical aim. By return post he received the following note:

> My Dear Boy—Send me her photo—for, of course, there's a woman in the case—there always is. You forgot to ask for a cheque. I herewith inclose it. Have you been ill? The law pays well. Stick to it. Ever your loving father,
>
> Francis Carleton.

P.S.—Provided she be good and beautiful I forgive and bless you.

Francis Jr. gasped at the amount of the cheque, it was more than enough to satisfy Durano and other creditors—and left him free to—to——

Society raised its twenty eyebrows, when close upon the news of Francis Carleton's serious turn towards business came the cards announcing his quiet marriage. Society also raised twenty hands and ten voices in vigorous protest. But what was done was done, and as no one could serve like Durano it was well not to push him too far. Of course there were ways of letting the newly-married couple see—but this resolution had nothing to do with the crush at young Mrs. Carleton's first "at home."

Belle Moses.

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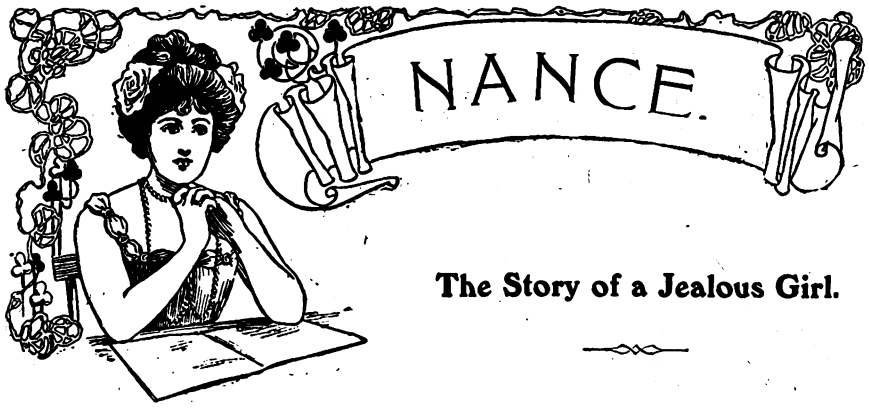

The Story of a Jealous Girl.

A YOUNG couple, very recently engaged, were discussing a question of grave importance.

The young lady held in her hand an invitation to spend the month of September at Meadow View, a friend's beautiful home in the Welsh mountains.

The young man said earnestly:

"You know, Gertrude, that I'm going there next week to fish and hunt. The other guests—quite a house party—will come the first week in September. You must give me your promise to accept Mrs. Black's invitation."

The young lady thoroughly understood the charm of girlish caprice, and the mingled fascination and annoyance her lover experienced in never knowing what she would do, think, or say. She answered with composure:

"I think I shall spend the month at Mont Eagle. I have heard that Mrs. Black is a charming hostess. I am sure that you will find her guests congenial and enjoy your outing."

She expected a violent protest, and felt assured that her decision would regulate the duration of his visit.

"We have reached the parting of our ways very soon, haven't we, Gertrude? Well, I give in, and hope you may have at Mont Eagle as much fun as I intend to have at Meadow View."

Two weeks later he wrote:

"Do you remember Miss Drumgoole's book, 'The Valley Path?' I have found the people of whom she writes. They are the aborigines of the hills. They fascinate me. I feel that I am continually discovering new types of humanity; and, Gertrude, I have found Lissie of 'The Valley Path.' Strange to say she is wonderfully like you. I often look at the flower-like face of this child-woman and wonder if a cruel fate will blight its beauty, or love some day wake her sleeping soul to a consciousness of happiness now unknown. I am at her cottage quite often, for her father is a great hunter and fisherman, to whom I have attached myself. He is a quaint old codger, whom Miss Drumgoole would immortalise.

"Nance often goes with us on our expeditions. She is quite familiar with the lore of the forest, knows the nature of all wild things, from the gulls which build their nests in the cliffs to the sparrows which answer her call. You would be amused at the 'curious' questions she often 'axes' me. I am her pupil and her teacher. She unfolds for me the mysteries of stream and woods, and I tell her of the life beyond the hills.

"She is a psychological study to me. Her mind unfolds like the petals of a white flower. Of course, her charm for me is because she is *you*, sweetheart, before you were touched with the wand of accomplishment and culture. You cannot realise how beautiful, how free life seems to me here among the everlasting hills. The very atmosphere seems saturated with dreamy romance. The haze on the hills, the rhythm of the river, the blended fragrance of tangled creepers and wild mountain flowers awaken me to a new experience of existence.

"Yesterday we went fishing, had a picnic in the woods. Doctor and Mrs. Black, old Fred Brown, Nance, and I composed the party. I caught one trout which weighed—but, excuse me, dear, I forgot that you feel no interest in such sport.

"The guests for September come next week. I think it a desecration that Mrs. Black's 'lodge in the wilderness' should be brought in touch with the outer world. You wounded me just a little when you preferred Mont Eagle to Meadow View, but I see that you were right. You always are. The hill country here would be unbearable to you when contrasted with that ultra-fashionable resort."

It was a coincidence that with this letter came one from Mrs. Black asking her to exercise a woman's prerogative, change her mind, and come to the wilds.

* * * * *

They were standing upon the heights looking down upon the river. He was pointing out the beauties of the scene. Her manner had lost its piquancy. She was listless and depressed. For an hour and a half she had waited for him to speak of Nance. For exactly that length of time he had waited for her to do the same thing. At last she casually remarked:

"Where is your wood nymph? Shall I not have the pleasure of meeting her?"

"No; she is dead."

"Dead!"

"I mean she has never been born; has never walked the earth in mortal form. Lissie was the creation of Miss Drumgoole's fancy, Nance of mine."

Then this utterly depraved young man threw himself upon the ground and laughed until the birds hushed their songs.

The girl became the impersonation of wrath and indignation. She turned to leave the spot, but he caught her hand and said:

"Gertrude, sweetheart, don't be too hard on me. I wanted you. I could not stay here and you at Mont Eagle, so I just baited a little trap with jeal—*curiosity*, I mean, and in you walked like the unsuspecting darling which you are. You would not come to oblige me but Nance Brown——"

"You are the most perfectly horrible——"

"Speak out, Gertrude, call me anything you wish—a beast, a reprobate, anything—I'll bear it all!"

Ripples of mirth and gurgles of laughter broke up the mock penitence, as he added:

"That Nance business was an inspiration."

ANNIE BRASHEAR.

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EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

IV.—THE HIDDEN MESSAGE.

EDWARD FARRELL had finished his breakfast, and was leisurely looking over his correspondence for the morning.

His letters were usually of a very varied and miscellaneous character, and this morning they were apparently no exception to the rule. There were book circulars, letters from students seeking his help, bills for chemicals and apparatus, notes from fellow scientists, and, in fact, all the varied collection of circulars and letters that usually welcomes the average scientific man at his matutinal letter opening.

Most of Farrell's letters were easily and quickly dealt with, but one seemed to greatly puzzle him. It was from his very old friend, Professor Sheyne, and had the appearance of having been hurriedly written. Farrell read it over once again.

"Dalton House, Woodford.

"Dear Farrell,—I inclose you the list of formulæ you asked me for, I think if you write them out according to their *common* names, study them well, and act as they suggest, you will find them all you need—but you will have to hurry with your investigation.

"Fe, NH_3, Hg, F, C_2H_4, As_2S_2, KOH, C_2H_6, $C_6H_{10}O_5$, NH_3, H_2O, Sb, Y, CH_2O_2, O, Pb, CaO, C_2H_4, H_2O, $CaCO_3$, H, Pb_3O_4, As_2S_3, Hg, C_2H_6, HCL, C_2H_6, Pb, KCL.

"Yours truly,

"RICHARD SHEYNE."

"What on earth does he mean?" Farrell ejaculated, after a puzzled pause; "the list of formulæ that I asked him for? He must be dreaming, or else I asked him in my sleep.

"Then what does he mean; to act as they suggest? What on earth *should* they suggest to any sane man? They appear to be only a list of the formulæ of some very common substances."

Farrell mused a little longer.

"I can't make head or tail of it," he said to himself, at length, "they are no earthly use to any investigation I am making."

"Perhaps," continued he, "it's only a joke of Sheyne's. Let's see what it looks like when they are written out as he suggests, with their common names."

He took a sheet of paper lying on his desk, and scribbled out the names of the substances represented by the symbols in the letter.

This is the record the paper held.

Iron, ammonia, mercury, flourine, olefiant gas, realgar, caustic potash, ethane, dextrin, ammonia, water, antimony, yttrium, formic acid, oxygen, lead, lime, olefiant gas, water, chalk, hydrogen, redlead, orpiment, mercury, ethane, hydrochloric acid, ethane, lead, potassium chloride.

Farrell stared long and fixedly at the paper, but with apparently no result.

"It's a mystery," he said, "or, if it's a joke, I fail to see the point."

Then, as he continued to pore over the paper, he suddenly drew a sharp breath, and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I see it," he cried, "the first letters of the common names are a hidden message to me," and he snatched up another piece of paper, and hurriedly wrote out the first letter of each substance in the order it stood on his list. This time the paper read like this I.A.M.F.O. R.C.E.D. A.W.A.Y. F.O.L.L.O.W. C.H.R.O.M.E.H.E. L.P.

Farrel gave a low whistle of astonishment. "This appears to be anything but a joke," he said. "'*I am forced away follow chrome help*'—whatever does it mean? It is evident that Sheyne is in trouble of some sort, and wants me to go to him; but what he means by 'following chrome,' I can't make out. The first thing to do is evidently to get to Woodford as quickly as I can, then I can, perhaps, find out more about it."

He hastily ran through the remaining letter or two of his morning correspondence, and then rushed off as fast as train and cab could take him to Woodford.

Sheyne's residence, Dalton House, stood on the outskirts of the delightful suburb of Woodford, near to the fringe of Hainault, or Epping Forest.

It was a pretty and a comfortable house, standing in

small grounds of its own, and not inconveniently crowded by its neighbours. Professor Sheyne was a fortunate man in more senses than one.

Possessed of good means and a great love of scientific pursuits, he was able to indulge the one at the expense of the other.

He had built himself a spacious laboratory at the far end of his grounds, and there, when not lecturing to his Cambridge students, he spent most of his time. His sister, Amy, kept his comfortable bachelor's home for him, and tended him with the indulgent love of an only sister. Yes, Richard Sheyne was a fortunate man; of that there could be no doubt.

He had lately been engaged upon the absorbing problem of gold extraction, and it was widely rumoured among his scientific friends that he had succeeded in perfecting a process that would probably revolutionise the whole of the gold extraction industry. Rumour even went so far as to say that a powerful South African Syndicate had approached him with the object of acquiring his secret in return for which they offered him an altogether fabulous sum of money. How far rumour was correct, Farrell had never tried to discover, except that he knew with certainty that Sheyne's researches had, of late, led him into the region of gold extraction.

As soon as Farrell's cab came to a standstill before the door of Dalton House, he sprang out, and hurried into the house. Amy Sheyne came into the drawing-room almost immediately, with a smile of welcome on her face.

"Good morning, Mr. Farrell. To what fortunate chance do I owe this pleasure? I hope you have not called to see my brother, because he was called away unexpectedly last night, and has not yet returned."

Farrell was rather astonished at his welcome. Evidently Richard Sheyne's sister had no suspicion that all was not well with her brother.

What could it mean? For a moment the suspicion crossed Farrell's mind that he had been hoaxed, but he dismissed the thought as soon as it had formed, he knew Richard Sheyne too well to entertain such a notion long.

He debated with himself as to whether he had better disturb Amy Sheyne's peace of mind with his vague misgivings. He knew her to be a brave little lady, however, and quickly decided that it would be best to be quite open with her.

"Did you see your brother before he left?" he asked. "Was anyone with him, or did he go alone? I am anxious because I received this letter this morning, and to my mind it points to your brother's absence as enforced rather than voluntary." And Farrell produced Sheyne's letter, and his own paper containing the solution of the cipher message.

Amy Sheyne's face went a shade whiter as she listened to Farrell's explanation, but she showed no other sign of weakness.

"It is very certain," she said when Farrell had finished, "that my brother has been forced away against his will. He did not come to the house himself, but sent a message by a man, who called himself a friend of his, to say he was called away suddenly, and might not be home for a night or two, and adding that I was not to worry.

"I know how eccentric Richard is, and how often he rushes off without a moment's warning, so I was perfectly satisfied, and should have rested perfectly content for a week yet, if it had not been for your letter.

"What can we do Mr. Farrell? That is the question. Shall we inform the police, or telegraph for a detective?" And her pretty face looked towards him for help. Then, after a short pause, she asked, "Whatever does Dick mean by 'follow chrome?' Can you understand it? You must help me," she said, with a pathetic look. "What shall we do?"

Farrell listened to her appeal very quietly, but the serious look on his face had deepened.

"You may depend, Miss Sheyne," he said "that all that is within my power shall be done for the sake of my friend and your brother. No! I don't think we will trouble anyone yet. I will look round first myself, and see if I can find any clue to work upon.

"I can't make out what your brother means by 'follow chrome,' but, perhaps, when I see the laboratory I may find some explanation of the matter there. Let us go to the laboratory first of all."

Amy Sheyne assented, and they went out through the open casement, across the lawn, and under the green trees to the low, one-storey building at the end of the garden.

It was Richard Sheyne's laboratory. The door was

The door was closed, but not locked. Farrell opened it and they both entered.

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closed, but not locked. Farrell opened it, and they both entered.

The blinds were down, and a solitary Bunsen was still burning on the bench.

Farrell raised the blinds, and then started a careful survey of the whole place. Windows, bench, bottles, floor—all came in for a share of his keen observation. The bottles especially he examined most carefully. One standing on the bench near the Bunsen was empty, but it, nevertheless, claimed most of his attention.

It was labelled "Potassium Chromate." On the bench near by stood a beaker, in the bottom of which a few drops of a yellow solution still remained.

This he also examined most carefully, and tested a drop of it with another solution, which he took from the bench of reagents at his side.

It turned blood red under the test.

Then, for a long time, he remained standing, lost in deep thought, with Amy Sheyne waiting patiently at his side. He roused himself at length, and again turned his attention to the floor. Just at the foot of the bench was a tiny patch of faint yellow, and from it, leading towards the laboratory door, a faint row of splashes. Farrell opened the door and examined the path outside.

On the step were undoubtedly two splashes similar to those inside, but beyond the step nothing could be seen.

Anything that had fallen there had apparently been soaked up by the gravel.

Farrell returned to the laboratory, and emptied the reagent he had already used for testing the potassium chromate into a wash-bottle. Armed with this he again examined the path outside.

The spots on the step turned a deep blood red as soon as the solution touched them, and down the gravel path at fairly regular intervals little blobs of dark red appeared as if by magic, under the influence of Edward Farrell's wash-bottle. He apparently had found all he sought, and he returned to Amy Sheyne in the laboratory with that look of eager but suppressed excitement on his face that always characterised him when some carefully followed out line of thought had been brought to a successful issue, and presented fresh and important possibilities. There was a questioning look on Amy Sheyne's face, and he hastened to comfort her.

"I think we are on the track, now," he said, "but you must leave the rest to me. Return to the house, and be as patient as you can. I will explain afterwards, and will let you know at once if anything important transpires."

* * * * *

Left to himself, Edward Farrell made up a large beakerful of the reagent he had been using, found up a spraying-bottle from amongst Professor Sheyne's apparatus, and filled it from the beaker.

Then he carefully locked the laboratory door, and proceeded down the gravel path, examining it attentively all the way by means of the spray.

At one point the blood-red spots failed to appear, and Farrell found that they there turned to the right in the direction of a small garden gate that opened on to a quiet by-road.

He did not wait to examine all the space between the main path and the garden gate, but went direct to the pavement outside.

There, to his joy, he could distinctly see on the clean York flagging a succession of faint yellow splashes.

He followed them easily to the corner, only calling his spray into requisition when in doubt, and never did he appeal to it in vain.

Always with unerring certainty it brought up in one direction or another the dark blood-red stains.

Once Farrell had to return to the laboratory for a fresh supply of reagent from the large bottle, and, at another time, he had to wait at a rather busier street than usual for at least a quarter of an hour before he could push on unobserved.

Comparatively slow though his progress was, however, it was nevertheless sure. After traversing nearly half a mile, and working for about an hour and a half, he was at last rewarded. The splashes led him to the entrance of a rather secluded house, right on the border of the forest.

The house stood well back from the road, and was approached by a neglected grass-grown gravel path, down the first foot or two of which Farrell had no difficulty in tracing the tell-tale splashes.

When he was assured that the splashes really did lead to the house, he quietly and quickly withdrew to the corner of the street. He was convinced now that his friend, Professor Sheyne, was a prisoner in that lonely house, and that he had with a brilliant forethought managed to plan this means of tracing his prison, trusting to Farrell's own shrewdness to discover the plan.

There were many things about it Farrell could not understand; but the main thing just then was how to communicate with and rescue his friend.

He would have dearly liked to tackle the task single-handed, but for his friend's sake he wanted to make no mistake.

So, with all dispatch, he made his way to the high road, and the police-station, and told his tale to the inspector in charge. That worthy was much impressed with Farrell's story, the more so, when he became aware of his visitor's identity, and he speedily promised to do all that Farrell asked.

Two men were found up, and told off to accompany Farrell.

They each took a revolver from the police stores, and, thus armed, departed with Farrell for the suspected house. Farrell was pleased to see that they were intelligent men, and could be trusted to act promptly if occasion demanded it.

Arrived at the house, Farrell marched boldly down the gravel path with one officer, and rang a loud peal on the door-bell, the other officer, in the meantime, making his way to the back of the house as best he could, with orders to prepare for any eventualities in that direction.

The peal had hardly died away ere steps were heard inside, and someone came whistling along the hall towards the door.

The door opened, and a hasty vision was had of a well-dressed, well-set up man of about forty years of age.

No sooner did the door open enough for him to catch sight of the policeman's uniform behind Farrell, however, than he hastily endeavoured to close the door again.

But Edward Farrell was too quick for him. With a quick bound he was inside, and wrestling for all he was worth with his opponent.

The policeman followed him, and together they soon had the man helpless at their feet.

At the noise of the scuffle a door upstairs opened, and another man came hurriedly down the stairs with a

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pistol in his hand to see what all the noise was about. He was also well-dressed, like his fellow, but apparently somewhat younger.

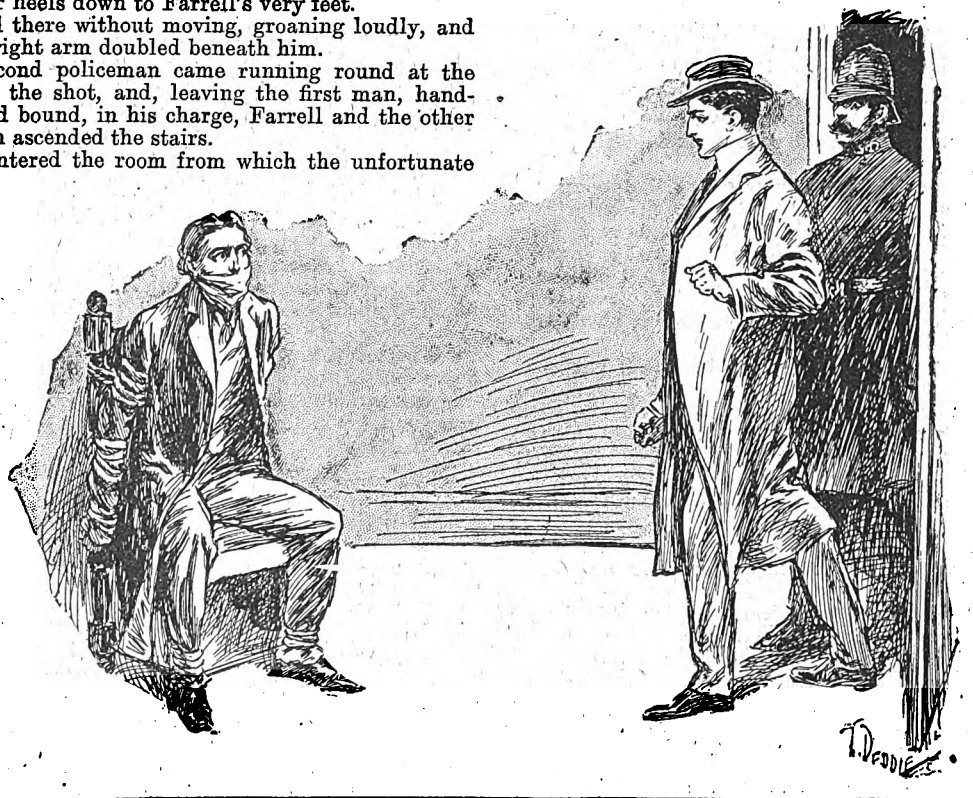
At the sight of Farrell and the policeman in the hall below, he tried to stay his hasty downward rush, with the evident intention of seeking safety above.

As he turned he hastily fired his pistol in their direction, fortunately without hurting either Farrell or the policeman, but, in the act of turning, his feet tripped in the loose carpet on the stairs, and he came head over heels down to Farrell's very feet.

He laid there without moving, groaning loudly, and with his right arm doubled beneath him.

The second policeman came running round at the sound of the shot, and, leaving the first man, handcuffed and bound, in his charge, Farrell and the other policeman ascended the stairs.

They entered the room from which the unfortunate man downstairs had emerged; and there, sitting bound and gagged against the wall, Edward Farrell beheld his friend, Richard Sheyne.



There, sitting bound and gagged, Edward Farrell beheld his friend Richard Sheyne.

Quickly they released him from his bonds, though it was some time before he could move with comfort.

"I am not surprised to see you," he said to Farrell, when the gag was removed, adding, with a smile, "that's a good compliment to you, eh?"

Then, pointing to a brown bag that stood in a partly-dried pool of yellow in the corner of the room, he asked: "Is that the clue that helped you to get here so soon? Not a bad idea was it?"

"There are several things I can't make out," said Farrell, "although most of it is pretty clear; but your sister is very anxious, and if you feel able we will return to Dalton House at once, and you can tell me your tale then." Then, to the constable at his side, "You had better fetch a doctor at once for the man downstairs, and then you and your comrade can arrange for the removal of both prisoners. I will call in at the police-station later."

* * * * *

When they were all sitting round the dining-room table at Dalton House later, and the thankful greetings of Amy Sheyne were over, Farrell turned to Sheyne, and said:

"Now, Richard, old fellow, if you feel quite equal to it I am anxious to hear your story."

"Not more anxious than I am to tell it," replied Sheyne, with a smile, "for it's one of the prettiest pieces of scientific collusion I have come across for a long while. Rogues must beware of the wiles of the scientist—eh? But to my story. You know, of course, that I have been investigating a new method of gold extraction lately. You don't know, perhaps, how eminently successful that new method is. Others do, however. How they found out I know not, but certain it is that more than one knows of its success.

"A well-known South African syndicate have already approached me for the purpose of acquiring my secret, but up to the present with no definite result.

"Well, last night, I was writing in my laboratory, when the door suddenly opened, and the two gentlemen you have captured to-day entered.

"After a certain amount of beating about the bush they came to the object of their visit, and that was my secret.

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"Naturally I refused to listen to them in any way, whereupon the younger man drew a pistol from his hip pocket, and politely informed me that to have my secret they were determined, but had anticipated opposition, and arranged accordingly.

"They further explained that they had temporarily rented a house in the neighbourhood, and suggested that it would be well for me to accompany them thither, when I could discuss their terms, and give them a practical demonstration of my process. All this, mind you, with frequent and suggestive glances at the pistol.

"I could see I was trapped. No one was likely to disturb them, as my laboratory," with a sly glance at his sister, "is regarded as sacred by all my household, and any call for help would only have meant speedy violence. Suddenly, it flashed upon me that I might trick them, if only I could communicate with you in some way.

"So as to put them off their guard, I appeared to agree entirely with their suggestion as the only thing possible for me. I then said that I was about to write to a scientific friend when they entered, and as it was a most important letter for him I should feel obliged if they would allow me to write and send it, casually remarking at the same time that, of course, they could read it to see that all was fair.

"They did not like the delay a little bit, but eventually agreed to let me have my way, and gave me five minutes in which to prepare. I dashed off the letter you, no doubt, received, and easily interpreted, for to a sceintific man it was absurdly clear, eh? and then gathered together a few chemicals to take with me. They read the letter and were quite satisfied with its genuineness, and watched me prepare a solution of chromate of potash without any suspicion, imagining, of course, that it was intended for their edification later on.

"I packed all the chemicals in the old, brown leather bag you saw in the corner of the room, but in putting in the chromate solution purposely managed to let the stopper fall out.

"Naturally, the solution flooded the bag, and came slowly drip, drip, drip, through the stitches at the bottom—supplying the track that was to enable you to trace my whereabouts.

"They suspected nothing, and imagined that I should reveal all when I reached their house.

"That, to their discomfiture, I absolutely refused to do, and they have since tried by all the means in their power to wring my secret from me by force. They were just about to try again to-day, when your opportune arrival successfully frustrated all their plans. But," turning to his sister, "did you not feel alarmed at my absence last night?"

"No," replied Amy, with a smile, "they did their work thoroughly; one of them came with a message from you, so he said, to say that you were called away suddenly for a day or two. So you see I was quite unsuspicious. I know how unaccountable you are, you know," she added, coyly.

"You haven't asked me yet," said Farrell to Sheyne, "how I managed to track the chromate so easily."

"I don't need to," rejoined Sheyne, with a laugh, "the silver stains are still on your fingers. Silver nitrate makes a fine red with a chromate doesn't it?"

Then then both laughed merrily together.

"I saw where your tracks passed a pillar box," began Farrell again, "I suppose that's where you posted my letter. But, what on earth kept you from shouting out or breaking away from those fellows when you were in the public streets?"

"Well, you see," explained Sheyne, "they were altogether too friendly and considerate. They insisted it was cold enough for a cape, and, as it might be tiring for me to walk alone, one of them took my arm. Their kindness was deceitful, however, for under the cape I could feel a pistol pressed close to my side. No, old fellow, I walked very steadily, I can assure you, I don't believe in tempting Providence."

"Well," replied Farrell, "thank Heaven you are safely through it." Then, raising his glass to his lips, he said, with a smile:

"Let us pledge our loved science, by whose aid alone we triumphed!"

[Next Week: THE RARE MINERAL.]

A Method in His Madness.

"You must be very fond of me," she murmured. "What makes you think so?" he asked in tones of tenderness. "Because you have only known me a week, and yet my little brother says that he has seen you hanging about our house every day since we became acquainted. Such ardour, I am afraid, will not last." "Shall I tell you why I have been hanging about your house during the day?" he asked, as he pressed the tiny hand which rested so lovingly and so confidingly in his own. "Tell me." "I am trying to get acquainted with the dog."

A Sudden Change.

At a drapery sale recently, two ladies got hold of what they thought to be the last pair of cheap gloves at the same moment. Each gave a pull—a long pull and a pull together. The gloves did not part, and one lady tartly remarked: "I got hold of them first." "I beg your pardon, madam, I was the first one." Then each gave another pull at the gloves. "Ladies," said the assistant, who had observed them, "we have six dozen of those same gloves." "I'm sure I don't want them," snapped one of the ladies, as she released her hold of the gloves. "They're miles too big for me," retorted the other, as she dropped them on the counter.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

Can a Woman Educate Her Husband?

CAN a woman educate her husband? "Wato" puts me a question to this effect, which so reminds me of a case of a girl I know who succeeded in doing so that I think I will tell you about it. She was a very pretty girl and well bred, and positively hated anything like vulgarity. But, somehow, when her destined husband came along, he had the one fatal defect of dropping his "h's" and speaking ungrammatically. Otherwise, he was the best fellow in the world, and was well fitted by position and character to make her thoroughly happy. But to have an ungrammatical husband! The thought haunted her every time he spoke, but she was afraid to tell him of it for a long time. But at last she plucked up courage, and every time he made a mistake she would laughingly tell him of it.

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She was so very good-humoured over it, that he did not take offence at all, but still he could not bear being laughed at, and bit by bit he grew out of the habit until now he never on any account drops his "h's." I think "Wato" might try the same course, taking care to treat his little defect as a joke, and making him see his failing in much the same way as when one is told one has a smut on the nose.

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The Stage-struck Girl Turns up Again.

I VERY much sympathise with "Wallflower," who is in love with a girl who seems to be very flighty and to have little common sense. Among other things, including extravagance, she wants to go on to the stage, and nothing seems to convince her otherwise. She has spent her youth in Africa, and has only just come to England. How should "Wallflower" act? Well, I do not know of any more difficult thing than to convince a person against going on to the stage. Reasoning seems very little use in such cases, and I have seen so many friends, male and female, who drift into the lower theatrical ranks, and finally lose all touch with ordinary life, that I have almost given up the idea of ever trying to reason with them.

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The best thing would be for "Wallflower" to take his sweetheart to some of the theatrical quarters of London, and let her see just what the condition of the average out-at-elbow actor or actress is, and to tell her that these people, too, at one time thought themselves embryo Irvings and Bernhardts. If she is a vain girl, perhaps this would awaken her to common sense. At the same time, while she has stage fever, my correspondent would do well not to think of marriage.

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Be Gentle when Telling a Man you do not Love him.

MANY correspondents this week, including "S. A. L.," "Tom," and others, write to me of complications which result from their discovering, after having gone a certain distance with a friend of the opposite sex, that there is someone else they like better, and ask me how they should act. For instance, "S. A. L." finds that she loves her existing *fiancé's* brother better than himself, and Tom has fallen in love with the friend of his *fiancé*, but the former is a girl of sensitive feeling, and does not want to appear to be drawing her friend's lover from her, and matters are at a standstill.

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I am reminded of a girl acquaintance of mine who, for a long time, was on the most intimate terms with a man, but shortly after actually fell in love with someone else. She did a thing that brought on herself a great deal of abuse, but I think, on the whole, she was right. That was to write to the first man and tell him perfectly candidly that she was not in love with him, and that he was not the man she could marry. It was a terrible blow to his vanity, but the result was an extremely happy marriage between herself and the second man, which has scarcely been clouded by one quarrel. Now, had this girl been less candid, and, instead of telling the real truth about her affections, made a lot of false pretensions, instead of two beings being made permanently happy at the cost of the injured vanity of a third, all three would to this day have been, perhaps, broken lives.

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A Good Word for the "Wild" Young Man.

I AM very glad to be able to put in a word for that kind of young man who is reputed to be "wild," and "not a gentleman," and all sorts of other dreadful things. "Troubled Heart" is very fond of a young man with this kind of reputation, but, of course, if he really deserved all that was said about him she thinks she ought not to continue being friendly with him. In her company she finds him only too quiet.

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Well, "Troubled Heart," I think the kind of stories that go about concerning most of the so-called "wild" young men are often based on nothing at all. The young men of those reputations are more often than not very good fellows at heart. And as to the idea of their being "not gentlemen," that, too, is said by some about every man who breathes. The meaning of the word "gentleman" is scarcely agreed upon by any two people. If you find him a gentleman yourself, that is all you have to bother about.

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And as to his being wild, of course I can't say unless you tell me what evidence you have. But believe me that more good young men are suspected of "wildness" than one can count, and more often than not, many a wild young man is suspected of goodness. So don't let these suspicions interfere with your friendship if you really are fond of him.

John Holloway.

JOHN HOLLOWAY and Kate Warburton had been married just over a year, but, unfortunately, it could not be said that their married life was an unqualified success.

Mrs. Holloway had from the first proceeded to "lay down the law," with the result that unhappiness gradually crept in, causing them to drift further apart, instead of striving to "jog along through life together."

Mr., or Jack Holloway, as he was familiarly called, was a real good fellow, and a man, who, given a chance, would have made one of the best of husbands, and, though he adored his wife, he was beginning to see that she was taking advantage of the fact, but he was determined he would not submit to play the part of the hen-pecked husband.

The cause of all the trouble was Mrs. Holloway's self-willed and dogmatic behaviour. She loved her husband undoubtedly, but, in return, she expected so much homage and unchallenged right of action, that it made it impossible for peace to be the reigning factor in her life.

One morning at breakfast, one of the many "tiffs" over some trifle or other, was proceeding in the usual manner, and doubtful compliments were banded about, Mrs. Holloway, saying in the most decided manner, "that if she was not to be mistress in her own house she would leave," and, as Jack did not contradict her, but rather hinted that he had no particular objection to such a course, "as he was getting tired of this mode of living," this only added fuel to the fire. The outraged woman blazed forth, the language used on such occasions was freely indulged in, and the once happy courting couple were transformed into miniature demons, who looked at each other with frenzied glare.

"I tell you what it is," said Jack, "I am heartily tired of those frequent bickerings, and something will have to be done, for as far as I can see, our position is getting more painful every day."

"It is your own fault," replied his wife, looking at Jack with a withering eye, though Jack did not wither, "you are so exacting and disagreeable, there is not a thing I do, but you are ready to find a fault. You are always grumbling, and——"

"Now, look here, Kate," interrupted Jack, who was controlling himself wonderfully well, "are you speaking the truth when you make such a statement? Have I not allowed you sufficient money, and implored you to pay more attention to your domestic duties, and yet you——"

"Oh, of course, have it all your own way," cried his wife, "you always argue from your own point of view, but I tell you distinctly, I will not be bullied by a man, and you may argue till you are blue in the face, but you will never convince me that I am in the wrong."

"Will you tell me exactly what you want," asked Jack, "and I will try my best to meet you half-way, and if we could patch up matters, we might get on all right after all. Don't you think so, Kate?"

"You need not try to get over me with your soft words; if there is to be any arrangement come to, I will see to it, so don't you worry about that. Do you think for one moment that I am going to give in to everything that you say or do? Not likely, you will find that I have a spirit in me that will not be crushed by any man, far less you."

"What do you mean by that contemptuous remark?" cried Jack, whose temper was now at boiling point. "When you can stoop to using such language to your husband, it is high time there was something done in the matter, and I tell you, madam," striking the table with his clenched fist to hammer home the argument, "I tell you, madam, this will and must cease, from now, do you hear, from now, and for ever, I——"

"You——"

"Silence, woman, you have drained the last drop of patience and toleration that a man could possess. I have now done with you," and going towards the door, he cast a look at his wife, and, though he had been working at high pressure, the steam had now evaporated, and he was himself again.

"Kate." No answer.

"Would you prefer me to leave you?"

"Leave me?" she replied, with an irritating laugh, "where would you go?"

"Of course, I have not decided yet, but you know, Kate, things cannot go on in this way."

"It is your own fault."

"Thanks! I deny it."

"Oh! Just like a selfish man, always in the right, of course."

"Will you listen to reason, Kate?"

No answer.

"Well, if the worst comes to the worst," as a sudden idea had come into Jack's head to test her love, "as I am a member of the Yeomanry I am thinking seriously of going out to the Front, and ridding you of my apparently hateful presence."

"*You* go to the Front?" with a look of disdain which she suddenly checked when she saw the expression on her husband's face.

"I suppose," Jack said, "you think I have not pluck enough to carry me through?" and he smiled, bitterly.

"I have nothing to do with whether you have or have not," she replied, "but please learn to talk sense, and in the meantime," going towards the door, "I have to call on Mrs. Scott as I promised to go shopping with her, and I ask you if you consider yourself a gentleman after your brut—your—the way you have spoken to me?"

"Very well, Kate, make your own arrangements, and I will make mine."

Little did each know what was to be the end of this morning's work.

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When Jack first spoke about the Yeomanry, he had no intention of putting his suggestion into force, which his wife was quick to see, and, of course, at once resolved "not to give in."

After his wife had gone, Jack began to ponder over matters. He was sure she loved him, but could not overcome the stubborn nature that had been reared in her. If he could only drag out a spark of her better nature, all might be well, but so far as he could see, it would be a difficult task.

Now, a scheme had slowly taken hold of his mind, and he resolved to put it to the test. He wrote an application to his commanding officer, volunteering for the Front, and then leaving it lying carelessly about, as though he had forgotten it, he went out to business, in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. When he returned in the evening, he glanced almost guiltily about to see if his note were still there. No, it was not.

"Ah!" he thought, "she has read it, destroyed it, and gone to weep the matter over. It will do her good, she will now see the folly of her conduct, and all will be well. My trick has done it this time," he told himself, as he smiled in the mirror, "bygones will be bygones, and all might yet end happily," then ringing the bell for the servant, he asked her if her mistress were in.

"Yes, sir, she is upstairs."

"I thought so," Jack mentally told himself. "You might please tell you mistress I will be glad to see her if she is able to come down."

"Yes, sir."

Jack stood before the fire with a happy and contented look on his face, and when his wife entered the room, smilingly, his heart beat with joy, and he stepped forward to embrace her, but to his surprise she avoided him, and the sun went out of his soul. There she stood with the old mocking expression.

"What is the matter, Kate?" asked Jack, with a look which showed his keen disappointment.

"Nothing, beyond my surprise at seeing you," she smilingly replied.

Jack's anger was rapidly beginning to rise, but he controlled himself sufficiently to say, "will you please explain?"

"I thought you were away," she said, in a manner that Jack did not know whether to laugh or not.

"Away; where to?" he asked in astonishment.

"To the Front, of course!"

Jack saw the joke at once, and laughed good-naturedly, explaining that it could not be expected he should get away in a few hours.

"Oh, indeed! How long will it take you?"

"A week or two, I should say," smiled Jack, who was beginning to enjoy his wife's manner of wheedling round him before she made the final plunge.

"Oh, you needn't smile," she said, "you wrote that letter, and purposely left it lying about, just to frighten me, but I am not so easily frightened, so I thought I would just give you a fright in return."

Jack began to feel somewhat uneasy.

"Where is the letter, Kate, or have you destroyed it?" he asked.

"No; I—I posted it to your commanding officer, as you call him. I hope he has more command over you than I have, but you need not look so dreadfully scared like, you need not have any fear of your offer being accepted, as it is men they want," and turning her back on him, she went out of the room.

Here was a pretty pickle to be in. Jack was no coward, though, at first, he had no intention of going to the Front, yet if he were accepted he would never dream of drawing back; besides, taking it all round, it was probably just the best thing to happen under the circumstances, so he told himself, yet he could not but admit that his scheme had failed, and he was in a tight corner. Then it suddenly dawned upon him, has Kate really sent off this letter, or is she only trying to frighten him, and see who was to win the game. Distracted between the two ideas, he was getting a little confused, and finally adopted the notion of going to the Club, and having a game of billiards to see if it would clear his brain.

Next day, he had occasion to again visit the Club when, as he entered the smoking-room, he was greeted with a shout of welcome. "Glad to meet you, old chap," cried Captain Drecas, of the Yeomanry, as he rose and shook Jack heartily by the hand. "I have seen your application, it is accepted, my boy, and you are all right, now we will have a good time of it. There's Teddy Laurie, Jack Hilston, Tom Bowers, and any amount of our fellows going out, and you, as a good shot and a good soldier, I am more than proud that you will be under my command. Now then, you fellows," he cried, "drink to Trooper Holloway of ours, and success to our venture."

The news was so sudden, that Jack did not feel quite such a hero as he would like to have felt, the fact was when he heard the first words his thoughts flew to his home and future possibilities.

When he arrived at his home that night, he was terribly distracted, so much so that his wife noticed there was something very far wrong.

"You are very quiet, to-night, Jack," said his wife, in a half-curious tone, "can you take me into your confidence, or are you going to treat me in your usual fashion?"

"Confidence, did you say, Kate? Confidence? What confidence has there been between us since we were married? I will tell you this, that I am going to the Front. I got the news to-day, and expect orders to-morrow to report myself for duty, *that* is the first and the last of it."

His wife turned pale and seemed like to faint, but she controlled herself, and merely remarked "we shall see."

Jack did not know that the next day his wife had gone to the commanding officer, and begged and prayed him to let Jack off.

"We do not use force, madam," was that officer's reply; "we volunteer, and your husband would be quite within his rights to withdraw his application, but I question very much if he will dream of doing such a thing, and I need not point out to you that—well, in my opinion—frankly *I* would not advise him to do so. He is a good member of the corps, and it is *men* we want."

"But couldn't you persuade him, as a married man, to give up this wild scheme?"

"It is no wild scheme, madam, *I* am a married man with a family, and I, like many others, when called upon, have responded to the call. We have a duty to perform, and we are going to do it. I sympathise with you, madam, and I admire your husband for his pluck."

When Jack Holloway received his notice to join headquarters to undergo drills and get knocked into shape before going to the seat of war, he felt glad and yet sorry. Had he got a kind word from his wife, even so far as things had gone, he would have faced matters with a lighter heart; but no, time passed on and it would soon be farewell; perhaps for ever.

At last the day arrived when the separation had to

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take place, but the farewell on both sides was, outwardly, quite formal, though each at the slightest sign from the other might have given way to their thoughts. With a light kiss on his wife's cheek, Jack Holloway turned from his door and walked jauntily away towards headquarters, but though his step appeared light, his heart was heavy as lead, while his wife, if he only could have seen her, immediately his back was turned, rushed upstairs and screamed out in her agony.

When, in a few hours, the troops were formed up to take the route, headed by the band, they were marched to the station followed by an immense crowd, as a great number in the ranks were known as prominent citizens, and they did get a send off. The sound of music came to Mrs. Holloway's ears as she sat in her room crying over the past, and what might have been, and as the sounds drew nearer, and cheers rent the air, she thought what it meant for her. "If they had not parted in anger—she must have been mad to have acted as she has done."

Every note of music she heard seemed to pierce her brain. Good Heavens! they are coming this way, and will pass the house, she dare not trust herself to look out, yet she can picture his face to herself; will she ever see him again? "Oh, Jack! Jack, come to me, I have wronged you so!" Afterwards the servant found her mistress in a dead faint; but the soldiers had gone past, and one who had looked up eagerly at his own window, in the hope of seeing her whom he loved, turned his face away with a look of disappointment and misery—his last hope shattered.

Time passed heavily with Mrs. Holloway since her husband had gone, and she reviewed all that had transpired during her short married life. If she had not been so stubborn, how different things might have been. She scanned the daily papers eagerly for news of the war, and one day fainted when she saw her husband's name among the wounded, but oh, what a relief when, afterwards, she saw the word "slightly." Oh, if he only knew the agony she was suffering from her own folly. "Oh, Jack! if you are spared to come back to me, how different I will be." But why not write to him? Strange she had not thought of that, "Yes, I will do so at once, I will confess all, and we may be happy yet," so suiting the action to the thought, she sat down and begun a long letter with "My darling husband," and ending with "Your loving wife, Kate."

It was a great load off her mind, and she felt sure she had done right, but where would she address it to, and make sure he would get it. The newspaper was the only thing that she could think of for the moment, and, hearing a boy shouting "paper" in the street, she went to the door, and hailed him. "'Ere you are, mem, latest edition, great battle fought, mem, heavy losses." What was it seemed to creep over her heart. Scanning the paper eagerly, her eye fell on the casualty list, and suddenly a piercing scream rang through the house.

The servant rushed into the room, and found her mistress in a heap on the floor. She tried to rouse her, but without effect, and, nearly scared out of her senses, ran for a doctor. When the doctor entered the house, and saw the silent form, he at once pronounced life to be extinct. "Failure of the heart through sudden fright, poor girl. She is gone. She must have got a terrible shock. Ah! We may find the cause here," said the doctor, lifting the paper. "Yes, here it is."

"Killed in action."

Alan Macgregor.

MAN OR BEAST?

How a Coroner Got Confused over a Horse's Bones.

"What are the facts of this case, doctor?" asked the magistrate, as Dr. Busby entered the witness-box.

"Why, you see," said the doctor, "Mr. Jones, the coroner here, yesterday discovered a lot of old bones in the cellar of a stable which was torn down. Being a little hungry for fees, he determined to hold an inquest, and he sent for me to get a professional opinion. They were the bones of a horse, you know; and when I got there Mr. Jones had them laid out on the ground in something like the form of a man; and when I remonstrated with him, he said they were certainly the bones of a man, and he was under a solemn obligation to hold an inquest."

"You say," asked the magistrate, "that they did not resemble the bones of a human being?"

"Well, you know, he had one leg made out pretty well, but when I called his attention to the fact that the bone of the other leg ran up through the body and stuck out eight inches beyond the top of the skull, he said the man may have been peculiar, he may have been deformed. He said he had an aunt whose leg bone projected so far from her head that she had to make a hole in the top of her bonnet."

"Did he produce the said aunt?"

"No. And when I showed him that the right arm had three elbows, while the left contained no joint of any kind, and looked like the breastbone of a chicken, he said that there was a man in Peru who had eight elbows, and that his oath as coroner did not oblige him to account for all the phenomenal freaks of Nature."

"Had the remains any other elbows about it anywhere?" asked the magistrate.

"Not unless you count the joints in the middle of the back. When I pointed out that the man had a row of teeth in his shinbone, and that some of them were as big as a walnut, and showed him that for him to attempt to eat his meals with his loins, or for him to have a toothache near to his toes was in violent antagonism to all precedent, as well as to the ascertained facts about human physiology, he said the man's teeth may have been shifted by disease or something, and, perhaps, that was what killed him. He said his grandmother knew a man whose teeth slid down and began to grow upon his ribs with fatal results."

"Had he his grandmother's affidavit to that effect?"

"He neglected to produce it if he had. The skeleton's left foot was composed of the horse's breastbone. It looked as much like a foot as a clothes-pin looks like the Venus de Milo, and as the other foot was made up of about three feet of the animal's spinal column, while the neck was formed of the horse's upper jaw, I remonstrated strenuously with the coroner."

"What did he say?"

"He hit me with the horse's fibula. I retaliated with the tibula, and in about two seconds he had heaved all the skeleton at me that I hadn't heaved at him. Then he winked at the jury, and it suddenly brought in a verdict of death from cause or causes unknown; and then I had him arrested for assault and battery."

The magistrate bound the coroner over to appear at the assizes; and when that functionary had given the bond, he moved off to collect his fees for the inquest.

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THE KING AGAINST DEANE.

CHAPTER I.

The Parting of Deane Brothers.

"And you think, Harvey, that this Paris journey is necessary? I mean, that *I* should make it?"

"Yes," said the senior partner, a trifle irritably. "I have already fully explained why I consider a personal interview with the officials of the *Crédit Lyonnais* to be more than desirable, in view of the crisis which threatens our firm in the near future; and why you, as its junior representative, and as such, more easily to be spared, are the fitter of the two to undertake the duty."

"Harvey," said Caworth Deane, curiously, "what is this crisis you talk about? It is the first I have heard of it. I think I know the books pretty well, and I am conscious of no impending financial disaster as being even possible."

"How about that last big lot of *Crédit Lyonnais* bonds?"

"Oh, yes! that American man—Cleeve's deposit! Well, what about it? The bonds are all right, aren't they?"

"That's just what I want to be sure about. The bonds are right enough in the way of being genuine; but I'm suspicious of Cleeve's claim to the undisputed ownership of them."

"Why didn't you tell me of this before?"

"Because I didn't think it necessary; and again, because the suspicion was only born in my own mind some half-a-dozen hours ago."

"Is that all that you fear?"

"No. This American has, within the last four days, as you are aware, drawn by arrangement with us, against the bonds to the extent of a hundred thousand pounds. From something I have heard to-day I am beginning to fear that we are in danger of losing the money; which, for Deane Brothers, would simply mean—ruin!"

"I don't quite understand," said the junior partner gravely. "If the bonds are genuine, we are guaranteed against loss, we having them in our possession as security."

"Nonsense, man! Can't you see that, if the *Crédit Lyonnais* succeed in making good their right to the bonds we shall be compelled to surrender them. The result of that will be that Deane Brothers, unable to stand the loss of the hundred thousand pounds, will have to suspend payment."

"Well, I certainly thought," retorted Caworth Deane, "that the securities we held would amply cover our credit, and to a far greater amount than that. What has become of the money? the money, I mean, which should form overwhelming assets for us?"

"Become of it! How should I know?"

"But you ought to know! Well, I am driven to an unpleasant conclusion, Harvey! and to say that I believe your luxurious, almost princely, style of living, to be at the bottom of the mischief."

"What do you mean?"

"What I say! More, I also consider your persistent endeavour to draw Eva Sheraton (against her will, I verily believe) into what you well know to be the coming muddle, is, in the highest degree, mean and contemptible."

Harvey and Caworth Deane were half-brothers; the latter—in his thirtieth year—being nearly ten years younger than the late Capel Deane's first-born. There was not a shadow of anything in common between them — physically, mentally, or morally, a fact that accounted in no small measure for all that afterwards happened.

Apparently the very pink of prosperity, the three-hundred-year-old bank of Deane Brothers, now that old Capel's hand had dropped from the helm, had, through wild and reckless speculation and extravagant living on the part of the senior partner, drifted into troubled waters.

Not a breath of this had, as yet, reached the public ear (even Caworth Deane was only *suspicious* of the truth, knowing nothing surely); so that the event, a month or two previously of a brand new customer, highly recommended by the firm's New York correspondent, was in no way remarkable.

Anyway, Silas Cleeve, of Chicago, duly deposited his hundred-and-fifty-thousand-pounds'-worth of *Crédit Lyonnais* bonds; ultimately, a few days before the brothers' talk, drawing against them to the tune of a hundred thousand.

The allusion by the younger brother to Eva Sheraton seemed to strangely agitate Harvey Deane. He rose hurriedly from his chair, and paced the little old-world bank parlour to and fro without speaking.

Suddenly, he stopped before where the other still sat, and placed both his hands upon his brother's shoulders.

"Caworth," he said huskily, and with an effort, "let us be open with one another. Do you love Eva Sheraton? Stop! don't resent the question—do you?"

"Why do you, of all men, ask me, Harvey? It isn't fair to Eva!"

"That is no answer. Yes or no?"

"I will not tell you!"

"I am satisfied!" and Harvey Deane resumed his seat at the table and commenced writing a letter.

"You will need money and credentials," he said, glancing up quickly, and ignoring altogether the subject last in dispute. "Here are both."

"It is settled that I am to go, then. Well! I will of course take the firm's credentials, but money? No—I have sufficient of my own for the purpose."

"Do as you will; perhaps it is better so."

At this moment there came a gentle knock at the door communicating with the chief cashier's room.

"Come in!" cried the senior partner.

Stephen Rutter had been in the service of Deane Brothers, man and boy, for over thirty years. He was not a particularly pleasant-looking individual. He had a trick of half-closing his eyes when he spoke, and screwing up one corner of his slit-like mouth.

Lean as a rake, and never without a pen in his hand, he was a long way from being an attractive man.

"Well, Rutter, what is it? I'm busy with Mr. Caworth."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I should like you to

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you to look at that entry again I spoke about this morning."

"Yes, yes! I know! I'll come presently—when Mr. Caworth is gone; don't worry me now."

"Very good, sir!" said the cashier deferentially, backing out into his own domain.

The door shut, however, an ugly smile spread itself over his face.

"They're concocting flight, I'm certain, for I caught a glimpse of a circular letter in front of Harvey on the table."

Voices sounded again in the inner room. The cashier moved steathily to the door, and put his ear against it.

Then, the door leading into the private passage opened, and the spy heard Caworth Deane bid his brother "good-bye."

But Harvey Deane did not reply, at least, the listener could detect nothing.

The younger man's firm tread along the passage, the banging of the private door, his voice in the street shouting "hansom!" and Stephen Rutter climbed on to his stool again and resumed his work, with a satisfied nod of the head in the direction of the partners' room.

* * * * *

"Peters! Halliday! quick! Come here!"

Stephen Rutter was on his knees in the bank parlour beside the body of the senior partner, which lay, half turned on its side, extended on the hearth-rug.

By the dead man's side (for there was no doubt that life was extinct) lay a peculiar-looking knife, of the sort that fixes the open blade with a spring. The blade itself was smeared half its length with blood; on the handle also showing two dark crimson spots.

Peters, the second cashier, had now joined Rutter; behind him crowding the whole staff of the bank.

It was to the former that Rutter addressed himself.

"Peters," he said, laying his hand on the dead man's breast, "send at once for the police! Not a moment must be lost! This is more than murder! It is fratricide! Mr. Caworth has killed his brother!"

CHAPTER II.

"It is a Hideous Lie! I Loved My Brother!"

Caworth Deane's direction to the cabman was Upper Seymour Street, Hyde Park.

Arrived at Mr. Sheraton's he asked for Eva, and in a few seconds was standing face-to-face with her in the drawing-room.

Loving her passionately as he had done ever since he had come to know love's real meaning, he had yet never indicated by word or sign his feeling for her.

But women need no ordinary word or sign by which to read a man's devotion. So Eva.

"Caworth! Whatever are you doing in our idle part of the town at this time of the day. I warrant Harvey is hard at work!"

Her merry laugh, sparkling eyes, and dainty teasing, were so many irresistible temptations to the young man.

"I bring a message from Harvey, that's all, to say that he will be unable to go with you to the Lyceum to-night."

She, somehow, did not seem to be vastly troubled at the prospect; at least he thought so.

"Are you sure, Caworth, that that is all? He could have wired!"

"Well, Eva! I am just off to Paris on firm business, and—and—I thought I should like to—to come and say good-bye."

"Are you going for long, then?"

She certainly spoke as if she had more than a passing interest in his answer. Her colour heightened, too; and she fidgeted with her hands.

And something he saw in her eyes told Caworth Deane all he longed to know.

"Eva! Eva!" he whispered, taking both her hands in his. "Do you really care whether my absence is long or short? I believe—I am sure you do!"

She could not deny it, but though she was under no promise to Harvey Deane, she *knew* that he loved her, and she grieved to hurt him, as would she any human being.

As for Caworth, his triumph was embittered by a feeling of shame, in that he had supplanted his brother; and when, half an hour later, he drove away to his own rooms to get his travelling traps, it was as one who had done, if unconsciously, a great wrong.

It did not take him long to gather his impedimenta, and when he arrived at Charing Cross it was to find the Continental Express within five minutes of departure.

Arrived in due course at Dover, he just had time for a hurried "snack" before boarding the Calais boat.

A porter carrying his luggage in front of him, he was himself about to step upon the gangway, when a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder from behind.

"Mr. Caworth Deane, I believe?" said a man's voice quietly.

He turned his head sharply, to see a couple of men with the unmistakable cut about them of Scotland Yard.

"Yes—that's my name!"

"Well," said his interrogator, advancing a couple of steps, and putting his hand on the junior partner's shoulder, "Mr. Caworth Deane, I arrest you in the King's name on suspicion of having stabbed to death your brother, Harvey Deane, before mid-day to-day in the bank-parlour in Austin Friars."

"Good Heavens!" You can't mean it! You must be a madman! I kill my brother!"

"I regret the necessity, Mr. Deane, but here is my warrant!"

"I will not look at it! I tell you man, it is a hideous lie! I *loved* my brother!"

CHAPTER III.

A Creature of Circumstance.

The case of Caworth Deane, the banker, taking his trial upon a charge of murder—the murder of his brother, Harvey Deane—was more than a nine-days' wonder.

Ever since the prisoner's committal City men talked of nothing else; and it was curious that the majority were in the accused's favour.

A portion of the Press, as usual, pre-judged the case, and, on the facts, proclaimed Caworth Deane a criminal of the very worst type.

Those, however, who had charge of him, bore witness to his marvellous calmness and quiet determination to trust in the ultimate triumph of his innocence.

"Why," said he to his solicitor, the morning before the trial, "Harvey and I were one. Disagreements we may have had on business matters—but serious quarrels—never! Of one blood, by our father, we never let the fact that we were not of one mother come between us for an instant."

At the outset of the trial it transpired that the day after Harvey Deane's death Stephen Rutter disappeared.

This, however, did not affect the issue, as the prisoner acknowledged that the knife found by the body was his,

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though he distinctly averred that he remembered lending it to Stephen Rutter the day before at the latter's request. That he did not return it, he would swear.

Peters, the second cashier, gave evidence, which went to prove that Rutter, immediately after the lunch hour, had summoned himself and the rest to the partners' room, and that the chief cashier had thereupon denounced Mr. Caworth Deane as the murderer of his brother.

The younger's contemplated hasty journey to Paris was insisted upon by the prosecution as unanswerable evidence of guilty flight.

The lending of the knife to Rutter was commented upon as being nothing else than an attempt to shift the guilt on to the absent cashier.

Then the prisoner's counsel made a remarkable request.

"Would the court adjourn the case till the next morning at ten o'clock, as he believed that by that time he would be in possession of facts which would establish Caworth Deane's innocence.

The judge was not one over-given to dock favour, and would probably have refused to grant the appeal for delay, but for that which he read on a slip of paper, passed up to him by the counsel for the defence.

"Adjourned till to-morrow morning at ten."

* * * * *

Before Caworth Deane was brought into court his counsel made a statement which fell upon everybody as a "bolt from the blue."

This was nothing less than that Stephen Rutter, the ex-chief cashier of Deane Brothers had confessed, before his death, the day before in Paris, in a street omnibus collision, that it was he who had, in the lunch hour, stabbed Harvey Deane, leaving by his victim Caworth Deane's knife, as a damning witness against the latter.

For years he had been robbing the bank, manipulating the books in such a way as to deceive the senior partner, who, to a large extent, was innocent of criminal waste and speculation. Whatever of the latter had been unwisely entered into had been done upon Rutter's advice; he, Harvey, being entirely in the cashier's hands, so far as technical business knowledge was concerned.

His plunder conveyed out of the country, Rutter sought, in the greedy spirit so common among men of his sort, to get the *Crédit Lyonnais* bonds into his hands. Hence his visit to Paris, *en route* to the West.

"The one to get this confession," said counsel, "was Miss Eva Sheraton, a young lady deeply interested, he might say, in the prisoner's welfare; and if his lordship would now order Caworth Deane's presence in court, he would put Miss Sheraton into the box, and let her tell her own tale."

This she did to the satisfaction both of judge and jury.

She told how her suspicions were aroused by Rutter's disappearance, and how, from a suggestion dropped by the second cashier, Peters, she decided to go to Paris, in company with her father, and to watch the offices of the *Crédit Lyonnais*.

Two omnibuses came into collision opposite the *Crédit Lyonnais* building, and in an injured passenger she recognised Stephen Rutter.

Having him conveyed to a hospital she, through the British Embassy, gained permission to nurse the man, whom the doctors from the first decreed would die.

Die he did, but not before she had succeeded in persuading him to confess both to Harvey Deane's murder, and to the mal-appropriation of the bank's funds.

"A very clever and courageous young lady!" conceded his lordship; "but an undesirable precedent, for all that."

"Deane Brothers" is only a City tradition now, although when the bank's affairs were wound up, everybody received twenty shillings in the pound.

Mr. and Mrs. Caworth Deane live with the latter's father somewhere in the North, where the echoes of feverish City life are seldom heard, though the terrible experiences of those few days last year will never be quite forgotten by either of them. Ralph Enderby.

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THE LOVERS OF YVONNE.

By RAFAEL SABATINI.

CHAPTER XXVI.
Reparation.

PRESENTLY as I recalled what talks we had had, and one in particular from which it now appeared to me that her coldness had sprung, a light seemed suddenly to break upon my mind, as perchance it hath long ago broken upon the minds of those who may happen upon these pages, and whose wits in matters amorous are of a keener temper than were mine.

I who in all things had been arrogant, presumptuous, and self-satisfied had, methought, erred for once through over-humility.

And indeed, even as I sat and pondered on that June day, it seemed to me a thing incredible that she whom I accounted the most queenly and superb of women should have deigned to grant a tender thought to one so mean, so far beneath her as I had ever held myself to be.

Things came to pass that night as I had planned, and the Fates which of late had smiled upon me were kind unto the end.

Soon after ten, and before the moon had risen, a silent procession wended its way from the Château to the river. First went Montrésor and two of his men; next came the Chevalier with Mademoiselle, and on either side of them a trooper; whilst I, in head-piece and back and breast of steel, went last with Mathurin, the sergeant, who warmly praised the plan I had devised for the conveyance of M. de Canaples to Paris without further loss of time.

Two boats which I had caused to be secretly procured were in readiness, and by these a couple of soldiers awaited us, holding the bridles of eight horses, one of which was equipped with a lady's saddle. Five of these belonged, or had belonged, to the Chevalier, whilst the others were three of those that had brought the troop from Paris, and which I, in the teeth of all protestations, had adjudged sufficiently recovered for the return journey.

The embarkation was safely effected, M. de Canaples and Mademoiselle in one boat with Montrésor, Mathurin and myself; the sergeant took the oars; Montrésor and I kept watch over our prisoner. In the other boat came the four troopers who were to accompany us, and one other who was to take the boats, and Montrésor in them, back to Canaples. For the lieutenant was returning, so that he might, with the remainder of the troop, follow us to Paris so soon as the condition of the horses would permit it.

The beasts we took with us were swimming the stream, guided and upheld by those in the other boat.

Just as the moon began to show her face our bow grated on the shore at the very point where I had intended that we should land. I sprang out, and turned to assist Mademoiselle. But disdaining my proffered hand, she stepped ashore unaided. The Chevalier came next, and after him Montrésor and Mathurin.

Awhile we waited until the troopers brought their boat to land, then when they had got the snorting animals safely ashore, I bade them look to the prisoner, and requested Montrésor and Mathurin to step aside with me, as I had something to communicate to them.

Walking between the pair, I drew them some twenty paces away from the group by the water, towards a certain thicket in which I had bidden Michelot await me.

"It has occurred to me, Messieurs," I began, speaking slowly and deliberately as we paced along, "it has occurred to me that, despite all the precautions taken to carry out my Lord Cardinal's wishes—a work at least in which you yourselves have evinced a degree of zeal that I cannot too highly commend you to His Eminence—the possibility yet remains of some mistake of trivial appearance, of some slight flaw that might yet cause the miscarriage of those wishes."

They turned towards me, and although I could not make out the expressions of their faces in the gloom, yet I doubted not but that they were puzzled ones at that lengthy and apparently meaningless harangue.

The sergeant was the first to speak, albeit I am certain that he understood the less.

"I venture, M. le Capitaine, to think that your fears, though very natural, are groundless."

"Say you so?" quoth I, with a backward glance to assure myself that we were screened by the trees from the eyes of those behind us. "Say you so? Well, well, mayhap you are right, though you speak of *my* fears being groundless. I alluded to some possible mistake of *yours*—yours and M. de Montrésor's—not of mine. And, by Heaven, a monstrous flaw there is in this business, for if either of you so much as whisper I'll blow your brains out!"

And to emphasise these words, as sinister as they were unlooked-for, I raised both hands suddenly from beneath my cloak, and clapped the cold nose of a pistol to the head of each of them.

I was obeyed as men are obeyed who thus uncompromisingly prove the force of their commands. Seeing them resigned, I whispered softly, and in answer there was a rustle from among the neighbouring trees, and presently two shadows emerged from the thicket. In less time than it takes me to relate it, Montrésor and his servant found themselves gagged, and each securely bound to a tree.

Then with Michelot and Abdon following a short distance behind me, I made my way back to the troopers, and feigning to stumble as I approached, I hurtled so violently against two of them that I knocked the pair headlong into the stream.

Scarce was it done, and almost before the remaining three had realised it, there was a pistol at the head of each of them, and sweet promises of an eternal hereafter being whispered in their ears. They bore themselves with charming discretion, and like lambs we led them each to a tree, and dealt with them as we had dealt with their officers, whilst the Chevalier and his daughter watched us, bewildered and dumfounded at what they saw.

So soon as the other two had crawled, all unconscious of the fate of their comrades, out of the river, we served them also in a like manner.

Bidding Abdon and Michelot lead the horses, and still speaking in my assumed voice, I desired Mademoiselle and the Chevalier who had not yet sufficiently recovered from his bewilderment to have found his tongue, to follow me. I led the way up the gentle slope to the spot where our first victims were pinioned.

Montrésor's comely young face looked monstrous wicked in the moonlight, and his eyes rolled curiously as he beheld me. Stepping up to him I freed him of his gag, an act which I had almost regretted a moment later, for he cleared his throat with so lusty a torrent of profanity that methought the heavens must have fallen on us. At last, when he was done with that.

"Before you leave me in this plight, M. de St. Auban," quoth he, "perchance you will satisfy me with an explanation of your unfathomable deeds and of this violence."

"St. Auban!" exclaimed the Chevalier.

"St. Auban!" cried Yvonne.

And albeit wonder rang in both their voices, yet their minds, I knew, went different ways.

"No, not St. Auban," I answered with a laugh and putting aside all counterfeit of speech.

"Good Heavens! I know that voice," cried Montrésor.

"Mayhap, indeed! And know you not this face?" And as I spoke I whipped away my wig and mask, and thrust my countenance close up to his.

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"Thunderation!" ejaculated the boy. Then, "By Gad," he added, "there is Michelot! How came I not to recognise him?"

"Since you would not assist me, Montrésor, you see I was forced to do without you."

"But St. Auban!" he gasped. "Where is he?"

"In Heaven I hope, but I doubt it sadly."

"You have killed him?"

There and then, as briefly as I might, I told him, while the others stood by to listen, how I had come upon the Marquis in the Château the night before, and what had passed thereafter.

"And now," I said, as I cut his bonds, "it grieves me to charge you with an impolite errand to His Eminence, but——"

"I'll not return to him," he burst out. "I dare not. Good Heavens, you have ruined me, Luynes!"

"Then come with me, and I'll build your fortunes anew and on a sounder foundation. I have an influential letter in my pocket that should procure us fortune in the service of the King of Spain."

He needed little pressing to fall in with my invitation, so we set the sergeant free, and him instead I charged with a message that must have given Mazarin endless pleasure when it was delivered to him.

The Chevalier de Canaples approached me timidly.

"Monsieur," quoth he, "I have wronged you very deeply, and this generous rescue of one who has so little merited your aid truly puts me to so much shame that I know not what thanks to offer you."

"Then offer none, Monsieur," I answered, taking his proffered hand. "Moreover, time presses, and we have a possible pursuit to baffle. So to horse, Monsieur."

I assisted Mademoiselle to mount, and she passively suffered me to do her this office, having no word for me, and keeping her face averted from my earnest gaze.

I sighed as I turned to mount the horse Michelot held for me, but methinks 'twas more a sigh of satisfaction than of pain.

Three days later we arrived at Nantes, and a week from the night of the Chevalier's rescue we took ship from that port to Santander.

That same evening, as I leant upon the taffrail, watching the distant coast line of my beloved France, whose soil it seemed I was not like to tread again for years, Yvonne came softly up behind me.

"Monsieur," she said in a voice that trembled somewhat, "I have indeed misjudged you. The shame of it has made me hold aloof from you since we left Blois. I cannot tell you, Monsieur, how deep that shame has been, or with what sorrow I have been beset for the words I uttered at Canaples. Had I but paused to think——"

"Nay, nay, Mademoiselle, 'twas all my fault, I swear. left you overlong the dupe of appearances."

"But I should not have believed them so easily. Say that I am forgiven, Monsieur," she pleaded; "tell me what reparation I can make."

"There is one reparation that you can make if you are so minded," I answered, "but 'tis a lifelong reparation."

They were bold words indeed, but my voice played the coward and shook so vilely that it bereft them of half their boldness. But, ah, Heaven, what joy, what ecstasy was mine to see how they were read by her; to remark the rich, warm blood dyeing her cheeks in a bewitching way; to behold the sparkle that brightened her matchless eyes as they met mine.

"Yvonne!"

"Gaston!"

She was in my arms at last, and the work of reparation was begun whilst together we gazed across the sun-gilt sea towards the fading shores of France.

If you be curious to learn how, guided by the gentle hand of her who plucked me from the vile ways that in my old life I had trodden, I have since achieved greatness, honour, and renown, history will tell you.

THE END.

When Should a Woman Do Her Shopping?

SHOULD a woman do her shopping in the morning, during the afternoon, or should it be delayed till the lamps are lighted, and the evening shadows have merged into the blackness of night? Sometimes the latter course is the only one available on account of illness, but Bile Beans for Biliousness will save women this inconvenience as they did for Mrs. W. Maiden, of Oakfield Avenue, New Street, Brierly Hill, Staffordshire. Here is Mrs. Maiden's experience as she told it to a *Brierly Hill Advertiser* reporter:—"From being a girl I have suffered from biliousness up to a few months back when I was cured by Bile Beans. At the age of fifteen, I was terribly bad; and up to less than a year ago I have many a time been in such a worn-out, ragged state on account of biliousness and headache, that I have had to go to bed completely done up. This has often occurred on a Saturday, and I have been unable to stir out to do my marketing until nine o'clock at night. Indeed I got so bad that I was nearly always in pain. The nasty bilious feeling, the headache, and the weakness were really fearful. My appetite left me altogether, and the very thought of food made me sick. Even being in bed only gave me temporary relief, and when I got up to try and do a little work I was soon as bad as ever. Nothing that I took seemed to do me good, until one day my nephew brought me a small book, saying 'Aunt! here is something which will do you good!' He read to me some of the cures which Bile Beans had worked, and after I had heard them I decided to try Bile Beans. I got some from the chemist, and the result of persevering with them has been marvellous. I am not like the same woman. I never feel bilious, and the headache which tortured me so has also disappeared. You may tell how healthy and well I am now when you hear that I can do my washing and housework with ease. Washing for our family is a heavy task, as there are seven of our own at home, and I took to three motherless children. Yet I can do the work with ease, and never have the languid, used-up feeling I always had before when not suffering actual pain. Bile Beans are alone responsible for this splendid change in me, and I have not only recommended them to several persons, but have given a number away." Not only for biliousness and headache, but for all female ailments, indigestion, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, piles, debility, nervousness, anæmia, colds, chill, rheumatism, skin eruptions, pimples, blotches, face disfigurements, blood impurities, and as a preventive of influenza, Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled. All chemists stock them, or you may obtain them direct from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending price, one and three halfpence or two and nine. Their use will prevent ill-health, rendering such night shopping, as in the above case, altogether unnecessary.

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2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS repayable on demand 2½%

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

FRANCIS RAVENSCROFT, *Manager*.

Coquettes

Preparation.

Ethel (who thinks her country cousin nervous): "Can't you find anything better to squeeze than a felt hat?" Country Cousin: "Wait a bit. I'm only reducin' my energy, for fear I might hurt you."

She'd Tried the Other Way.

Mamma: "Gracious, child! don't carry the cat by the tail!" Little Edith: "But, mamma, if I carry her by one arm like you do me, she tries to bite me."

Hardly Necessary.

Auntie: "You should ask to be excused when you leave the table." Little Nephew: "Should I? I thought, from the way you acted about that third piece of pie, that you'd be glad to see me go."

What He Could Do.

"Now," said the warder to the forger who had just arrived at the prison, "we'll set you to work. What can you do best?" "Well, if you give me a week's practice on your signature I'll sign your official papers for you," said the prisoner.

A Good Reason.

"And what are you going to make of your son, Smithers?" asked the vicar. "A shoemaker, like yourself?" "Oh, no, sir," was the reply. "You see, he's uncommon fond of animals, and so we thinks of making him a butcher!"

She was in Demand.

Female Mendicant: "I'm a poor widdy woman with eight children. Can you give us some clothes?" Lady: "The only clothing I have to give away is one of my husband's coats." Female Mendicant: "Give it to me, lady; I might marry again. There are several gentlemen as have their eyes on me."

Those Bargains Again!

"But, my dear," protested Mr. Young when Mrs. Young showed him her purchases for the day, "why have you bought four dozen clothes pins when all the washing is done at the laundry?" "Oh, Harry, how can you be so horrid?" began Mrs. Young tearfully. "Why, they were bargains."

It Didn't Always Agree.

"This climate doesn't agree with me very well," remarked the passsenger with the cough. "Well, to tell the truth," responded the chance acquaintance in the next seat, "there are times when it disagrees with me, too, in the most provoking and ridiculous manner. I'm the man who makes the official weather predictions."

The Fall of Man.

Mr. Stebbings: "Statistics go to show that the male proportion of the world is fast falling off." Mrs. Stebbings: "Gracious me! Isn't there some way of tying them on?"

What Papa Said.

The Sister's Beau: "So, Johnnie, you're going to be a chemist like papa, eh? And did you know this diamond of mine was the same substance as charcoal?" Johnnie: "No." T. S. B.: "And hasn't papa told you that?" Johnnie: "No. He said it was paste."

Getting Out of Danger.

Nervous Passenger: "Why are you steaming along at such a fearful rate through this fog?" Ocean Captain (reassuringly): "Fogs are dangerous, madam, and I am always in a hurry to get out of them."

Very Distant.

"Let me see," said Brown to Jones, "isn't this Jones that we were talking about just now a relative of yours?" "A distant relative," said Jones. "Very distant?" "I should think so. He's the oldest of twelve children and I'm the youngest."

Never Again.

Mr. Pott: "I'll be cook myself, my dear, rather than I'll set foot in a servants' registry office again. I went there to-day, and picked out the most respectable-looking woman in the room, and stepping up to her said: 'Can you fill the position of cook?' 'Sir,' she replied, 'I'm trying to fill that of our coachman, and I think you would suit admirably.'"

A Silenced Girl.

"You need not deny it, I know that he kissed you while you were sitting on the steps last night." "Yes, mamma, eight or ten times, I fancy." "Eight or ten times! Why—I—you——" "Yes, mamma, dear, I told him the first time if he did it again I wouldn't speak to him, and after that I could not tell him to stop without breaking my word. And I knew you would not want your daughter to tell a fib."

He Wanted an Introduction.

Jack: "I have a chance to marry a poor girl whom I love, or a rich woman whom I do not love. What would you advise?" George: "Love is the salt of life, my friend. Without it all else is naught. Love, pure love, makes poverty wealth, pain a joy, earth a heaven." Jack: "Enough. I will marry the poor girl whom I love." George: "Bravely spoken. By the way, would you—er—mind introducing me to the rich woman whom you do not love?"

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,

inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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ASTHMA

WHY ? ? is it generally thought that there is no cure for

ASTHMA, CHRONIC BRONCHITIS,
SHORTNESS OF BREATH, EMPHYSEMA, BLOOD-SPITTING,
HAY FEVER, etc.

BECAUSE ! ! the usual treatment only confine themselves to combating single symptoms instead of attacking the root of the disease.

BE SURE THERE IS ONE
ABSOLUTE LASTING CURE.
SUFFERERS WILL RECEIVE POST FREE
FREE OF CHARGE.
particulars of the famous WEIDHAAS HOME TREATMENT when applying to THE PAUL WEIDHAAS HYGIENIC INSTITUTE, 16 T.A. Buckingham Rd., Brighton.

£1,000

The DIRECTOR is prepared to pay the above sum to any Charitable Institution if the testimonial in this advertisement is not a genuine extract from the patient's own letter.

Professor Weidhaas has tried the Treatment on himself, after having been given up as incurable, and cured himself, and had then practised it for over 19 years in many thousands of special cases. Many having suffered for over 40 years have been cured by this Treatment (in some instances even at the age of 70 or 80 years), after having been

GIVEN UP AS INCURABLE.

PROF. WEIDHAAS.

No interference with daily occupation. Send description of complaint, and mention if you suffer from **COLD FEET.**
Read the following Testimonial, one out of thousands received:

BRONCHIAL ASTHMA OF THE WORST SORT AND EMPHYSEMA CURED. (Eight Years' Standing.)

When Mr. J. Walton applied for the treatment he wrote: "I suffer from Asthma or Bronchitis. I cough and spit a lot of phlegm, and I am very weak. By any exertion I am out of breath, and puff and blow as if I had been running a race. Up to eight years ago I had been full of walk and strength, but I was attacked with influenza, and from then to now I have never been well. At night I am struck with cramp in my feet. I have lost about 30lbs. during the last seven or eight years." After the treatment he writes: "It is two months since I discontinued your treatment for Bronchial Asthma of the very worst sort, and now I am as well as ever I was in my life. I can walk 30 miles a day without being much tired. It is the safest, the best, and most natural treatment in the world."—JOHN WALTON, Barrowford. (Full address on application.)

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THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.
EPPS'S
GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.
COCOA
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Every Man suffering from Varicocele and its consequent nervous exhaustion speedily relieved and cured by the most advanced and rational method of treatment yet introduced. An Illustrated Circular giving full particulars and testimonials showing successful cures, sent free in a sealed envelope.—S. S. NORTON, 59 and 60 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C. Established over 30 years. Consultation Free.

The only Efficacious Substitute for Cod Liver Oil.
Devonshire Cream
(Really Genuine).

In patent air-tight tins. ½lb., 1/4; 1lb., 2/4; 2lb., 4/-: including tin & postage.

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Morchard Bishop,
DEVON.

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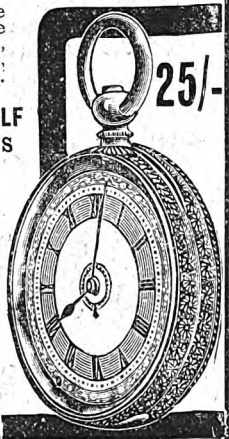

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ONE MONTH'S FREE TRIAL ALLOWED.
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The Best & Safest Remedy for

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NURSE HILL, of the London Association of Nurses, writes:

"I have seen Kaputine administered to many patients, and can truly say it is a remedy which should have a place in every household."

All Leading Chemists sell KAPUTINE, 1/-. Samples One Penny.

If your Chemist has not KAPUTINE send his name and address to C.G. KAPUTINE, HUDDERSFIELD and we will send you SAMPLES FREE.

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UGLY NOSES. Ray's Nose Machines reform Pug, Snub, Broad, Bottled, Crooked, or Prominent Noses. By H.M. Royal Letters Patent. Thousands improved. Particulars for stamp, Red Nose Cure, medically approved, 3/9. Book "Cause and Cure," 1/-. Ear machines, etc.
Lees Ray (A 1), Specialist, South Castle Street, Liverpool.

FREE TO THE RUPTURED

Wm. Kidd (*from a Photo*)

GLENFONDLAND, HUNTLY, ABERDEENSHIRE.

Mr. KIDD having cured himself of Rupture by Dr. Rice's method, desires others to know of this new cure. **A free sample** and books will be sent to any afflicted person that writes to

Dr. W. S. RICE,
(57) 9, Stonecutter St.,
London, E.C.

AN END TO SKIN TROUBLES.

READ THIS LETTER

From a sufferer who has been cured by "ANTEXEMA," written entirely of his own part, out of gratitude for a happy release from suffering. Mr. Robert Dawson, of 89 Albert Street, Gateshead-on-Tyne, writes:

"I received your sample bottle of 'ANTEXEMA,' for which I do not know how to thank you. After suffering untold torture for three weeks, the first dressing that I put on relieved all the burning—which was like someone burning with a hot iron—and I had what I had not been used to, a good night's rest. After the sample bottle was used, I got a 1/1½ bottle, and thank God it is now cured. If ever there was a genuine article advertised for the benefit of the public—'ANTEXEMA' is one—and worth five times what you charge for it."

This letter is one of many like it, which we have on file, and can be seen at any time. If you are a sufferer from *any form of skin trouble*, write for a free trial sample of

"ANTEXEMA"

sent post-paid by return, together with valuable treatise on the skin, in plain wrapper, or get a bottle from your chemist, price 1/1½ and 2 9. Refuse injurious substitutes. The Antexema Co., 83 Castle Road, London, N.W.

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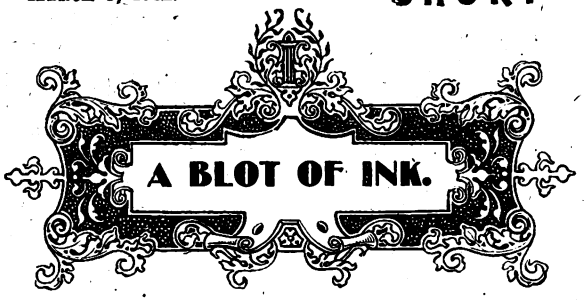

It is a story so simple, so uneventful, that it is hardly a story at all, and it all turned on a blot of ink.

At the age of twenty-five I was neither more foolish nor more sensible than most young men, and I was the victim of a violent passion for Laura Preval, a pretty actress. She was several years older than I, and, like most of her class, fond of admiration from those about her. I was one of a train of young men who sought her, obeying her slightest gestures as mandates from a queen.

One day, moved by some latent sense of independence, I revolted at a service I was asked to perform. We quarrelled; Laura had a violent temper, and in spite of the thousand follies I had committed for her she said she never wanted to set eyes on me again. Calling all my pride to hide my despair I pretended that such would indeed be my pleasure and I left her, determined to take myself and my wounded love away from London.

Then I thought of my grandmother's place in the country. It was many years since I had been there, and without sending any notice I packed my trunk and left London. I was not unhappy, for I counted on my absence doing for me what my presence could not. Laura would miss me, her self-love would be hurt at seeing how well I could live away from her, and in a few days I would receive a perfumed note bidding me "return."

How surprised they all were to see me when I came upon them in the beautiful drawing-room after dinner. There was grandmother, my aunts, and a houseful of young cousins, whom I had not seen since they were babies. I kissed them all, and found myself before a tall slim girl whom they told me was Natalie.

"What! This little Natalie!" I cried and kissed her, too. The next moment I felt a stinging slap on the side of my face and drew back.

"Natalie," said my grandmother, reproachfully, "Clarence is your cousin."

"I don't care if he is," said the girl, angrily, rubbing her cheek with her handkerchief; "I'm not going to be kissed by every impudent fellow who chooses to call himself my cousin."

"I shall never do so again from choice," I replied. "So far as I am concerned the relationship is dissolved."

"It is much better. I do not wish any ill-bred person for a cousin."

Grandmother interrupted and I walked away, thinking what an ill-tempered, disagreeable person I was to be in the same house with.

I had left my address in London. Letters and papers were sent to me, but not the letter I was looking for. The days passed and I grew restless and miserable, watching always for the arrival of the letters and suffering fresh disappointment each time.

My cousin Natalie interested me a little, but it was more curiosity than anything else. She seemed to be made up of so many different moods. To the others she was gentle; to grandmother she was sweet and considerate; to the children, gay and happy. Once I surprised her sitting in a great chair before the log fire, and the expression of her whole face and figure was one of sadness.

There was something charming in the mixture of childishness and womanliness in the face the firelight played upon, and I sighed to think of the friend she might have been to me if she had not taken such violent offence at my cousinly tribute.

My sigh aroused her. She looked round, saw me, and the expression vanished from her face to give place to the usual one when I was by—dislike and scorn.

All this time I was becoming so wretched over the silence of Laura that Natalie must have noticed it, for she began to treat me with a little kindness. I met her half-way and soon our feud was forgotten and we were, though not intimate, to an extent friendly.

Three weeks passed. I could endure it no longer. I would write to Laura, taking all the blame for what was her fault and asking her pardon. It was hard, but I could not be an exile any longer. I sat down at the library table, and wrote all my despair, my love, my hope, everything that youth puts into such letters was there: excuses, promises, vows. It would be a stony heart that would not melt at such an outpouring. I reached the end at last, and signed my name, when, terrible misfortune! my pen slipped and the page was decorated with a great blot of ink!

I uttered an exclamation. How could I write it over again? Copy those sentences that had been written in my heart's blood? I searched wildly for something to take out the spot, and at that moment Natalie entered.

"Natalie!" I cried, "haven't you got something to take out a blot of ink? An eraser, or a knife, or something?"

"Yes," she answered, hurrying to my relief. She opened a drawer and took out a little pearl-handled knife. "Let me do it for you. I can do it beautifully."

Her offer was made in kindness, and I willingly relinquished my place to her. She placed her hand over the writing with great care, so as to conceal it, and then went to work on the paper. I stood behind her. What little hands she had! The sun slanted in at the window and caught her hair in a ruddy gleam, lighting up little fine threads of pure red gold. How soft and fine it looked! I thought of another head, bleached and coarse. I felt a sudden desire to tell Natalie that she was all that a lovely girl should be, when she sprang up and faced me.

"If I had known it was that kind of letter I wouldn't have helped you!" she cried.

"If I had not trusted in your honour I wouldn't have accepted your help," I replied.

Her eyes blazed and she cried, in a voice which broke at the end:

"I—I couldn't help seeing. My hand slipped a little and then a little more—and I saw the end. I—I think you might have told us you loved somebody else——" She stopped, the anger faded away and she stood gazing at me with reproachful eyes. Then there was a quick little sob and she fled from the room.

In a conflict of feeling I had never before experienced I snatched the letter from the table and tore it across, and then again and again. Throwing the scraps in the fire, I spent the rest of the afternoon hunting the house for Natalie, and at last I found her.

The sight of a blot of ink always causes my heart to swell with thankfulness.

W. Werner.

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The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 61—66," to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, March 17th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 61. PROVERB MAKING.

The following letters, when re-arranged, will form a well-known proverb:

A E H II LL N OOOO P SS TTTT

No. 62. TRANSPOSED LETTERS.

My 12345 is a dark-coloured stone.
14532 is to plunder,
43251 are short stories.
14325 is hard.

No. 63. PUZZLE.

Explain the following:

A 5
C 4
A 104.

No. 64. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

A town in Great Britain, a lake in Italy, a town in Prussia, a town in England, the scene of a famous battle, a province in France, a town in England, a town in Scotland.

My initials read downwards give the name of an English county, and the finals give the name of a town in that county.

No. 65. CHARADE.

Past yonder lowly cottage door
A handsome knight rode by;
He rein'd his steed and breath'd soft vows—
For ah! my FIRST was shy.

But soon his pleading prayer was heard,
His heart did leap to see
My SECOND placed upon my first,
Who sighed, "I'll go with thee."

Tho' hoary time went swiftly by,
They loved so fondly through;
For in my WHOLE she wedded him—
A husband good and true.

No. 66. WORD SQUARE.

Form a double word square from the following letters, the connecting word of which is a well-known city of the British Empire:

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RR TTTTT Y

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H. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull.
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SOLUTIONS.

37. HOODWINK.

38. A miens
S evern
P reston
A ral
R hine
A rarat
G lasgow
U mballa
S enegal—ASPARAGUS.

39. EARTH
ADORE
ROBIN
TRIER
HENRY

40. D-well. W-hip. C-h-arm. A-corn. S-w-itch. T-rain. T-r-ice. T-rifle.

41. The letter I.

42. He stopped for an instant, twisting the branch he held with nervous strength, then finished with a shake in his voice, "I hoped in spite of all, Julie, that I'd made you think of me just a little more kindly."

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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CAPTAIN KETTLE

AS HE IS

In the MARCH

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6D.

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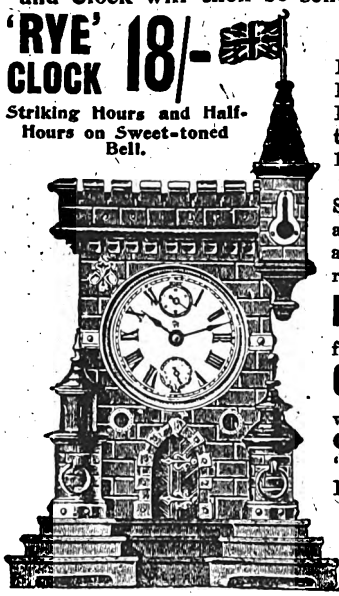

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OR if you send the full amount at once, we will send you a **Free Gift** for cash of a "BADEN-POWELL" POCKET-KNIFE, value 2/- Cash returned in full if Clock is not approved of, and is returned to us at once.

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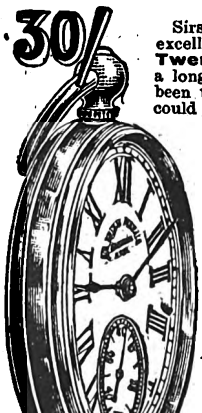

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SHORT STORIES

Chickering] [Boston.

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My face in repose.

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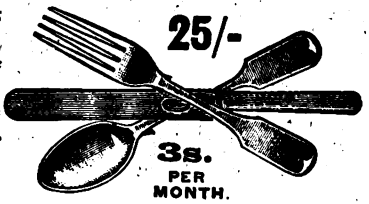

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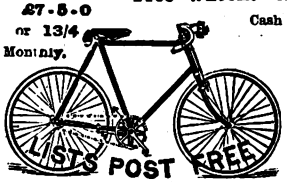

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SHORT STORIES

No. 689.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending March 15th, 1902.

Thrilling New Serial. **Start To-day.**

LINK BY LINK.

The Opening of the Story.

GERALD MORTIMER lives with his widowed mother and a small brother and sister at Moulstone Manor House. A great friend of his is Dr. Branksome, medical attendant at Moulstone Asylum. One night when Gerald is returning from a visit to the doctor, he is encountered by a wild looking woman, in a long blue cloak, who appears to be waiting about for someone. Gerald asks her if he can help her in any way.

"You cannot wait here," he says; "it is nearly midnight, and you are cold and weary. Come with me to my mother's house till morning."

"No, no, no! My place is here. I must wait."

"But you will be better for a rest," he urges. "Come with me!"

Her mood demands silence and solitude, and she does not reply. Instead she swings round with sudden quickness and passes through the gate on to the common beyond. Then, at a pace that surprises Gerald Mortimer, she speeds along the cart-track. He starts to follow, but loses all trace of her in a thick wood.

At breakfast the next morning, news reaches the Manor House that one of the asylum patients has escaped. Gerald at once thinks of the woman he met on the previous night, but learns that the missing person is a man.

Nina Penhurst, governess to the Mortimer children, meets Gerald in the garden, after he has been to the asylum to tell Dr. Branksome of his previous night's encounter, and learns further particulars of the missing patient from him. Gerald tells Nina that the man thought he had been cheated out of some property, and that his name was Anthony, not Felix.

"Felix—Anthony—he thinks his name is Anthony—Anthony what?" she asks.

"Cordelvin—Anthony Cordelvin."

Nina Penhurst looks up quickly as Gerald Mortimer uttered the name. Then she makes as though to step forward. Her lips form for speech, but she can utter no word. Her beautiful eyes change in a moment their look of clear intelligence for one of awesome vacancy. She sways where she stands—sways to the left and the right. A moment more and she would have fallen, but Gerald Mortimer steps to her side just in time to catch her, as her senses leaving her she falls forward in a dead swoon.

In a back street in Whitechapel lives a broken down doctor, Ephraim Manisty by name. The night after the escape from Moulstone Asylum, he is visited by a man giving the name of Causton, who offers him a fee of £1,000 to amputate the left arm of a friend of his at Streatham. Manisty consents.

As the doctor opens the door on his way out, a soft sound as of someone moving away falls on their ears—a sound as of rustling skirts.

"What was that?" asks Mr. Causton.

"I don't know—probably some poor outcast resting on the step," replied Dr. Manisty.

They get into the cab, which had been waiting near a coffee-stall at the corner of the street. But neither notice a tall, gaunt figure, clothed in a faded dark-blue cloak, hiding in the shadows of the houses. Nor do they know, as they rattle quickly back towards the city, that fifty yards behind them is another cab, bearing the same weird figure.

When Manisty sees his patient he finds that nothing is the matter with his left arm, but on Causton threatening to shoot him if he does not perform the operation, he consents to do it.

After the operation the doctor receives nine notes of one hundred pounds each. He clutches them quickly, and thrusts them into his pocket without even counting them and leaves the house.

A week later, Nina Penhurst and her two young charges, Harold and Gladys Mortimer, are out for a walk, during which they visit the ruins of Monkstone Castle. While the children are playing, Gerald comes on the scene, and declares his love for Nina. She says she cannot accept it, but gives no reason. Just at this moment a cry of distress is heard from Harold. Gerald rushes to the spot, and there finds that the boy has discovered the dead body of a man dressed in Asylum clothes, with his left arm missing, it having been clumsily amputated.

Telling Harold to say nothing about the discovery, he hurries Miss Penhurst and the children off home, and then rushes away to the asylum to see Dr. Branksome. His intimacy with Dr. Branksome is close enough to render announcement unnecessary, and in a short space of time he bursts into the doctor's room.

"Branksome!" he gasps, "I have just found a dead man!"

"Good Heavens, man! Where?"

"Under a wall in the ruins of Moulstone Castle. It is an old man dressed in asylum clothes."

"Asylum clothes—then it is Cordelvin, who escaped last week."

"Yes; that is what I thought. His face is somewhat disfigured, and he has only one arm!"

"One arm—but Cordelvin had two—I don't understand."

He turned to the wall and rang a bell.

"There is a mystery—a strange mystery," he said to Gerald. Then to the servant who appeared, he added:

"Tell Beasley to get a stretcher party ready immediately to accompany me to the Castle ruins."

A little later Beasley and three other warders, bearing a stretcher between them, were on their way with Gerald Mortimer and Dr. Branksome to the fateful spot.

CHAPTER V.
The Disappearance of Nina Penhurst.

"Well, Branksome, and what's the result of your examination?" queried Gerald Mortimer three or four hours later. They were once more in the doctor's room.

Dr. Branksome knocked out the ashes of his pipe and then answered slowly:

"This is a most extraordinary case!"

"In what particular way?"

"Well, in the first place, the amputation of his left arm. It isn't the result of a regular surgical operation at all. The arm has simply been roughly amputated by a layman."

"Good Heavens!"

"Yes; it is startling, isn't it? Furthermore, a mole which Cordelvin had upon his neck before he escaped has been branded off, branded by a hot iron. There has been foul play. Some enemy has been at this ghastly work."

"But a motive for an enemy? Who on earth could have sought to avenge himself on a poor madman in this diabolical fashion?"

The doctor puffed at his newly-filled pipe.

"You remember that woman whom you met?" he said.

"The woman in the blue cloak?" Gerald said quickly. "No, Branksome, that won't do. I think you're quite out there. She was eccentric, I admit; but she seemed so timid, so shrinking; her face was so full of suffering. No, no; she could never have done a thing like this."

Dr. Branksome shrugged his shoulders.

"You may be right," he remarked, "but in these cases personal appearances are the worst things of all to judge by. In any case, the woman told you she was waiting for *somebody*, and it's curious that Cordelvin disappeared the same night. A minor detail, but still a curious one is that the woman, when she left you, made off in the direction of the very place where the dead man was found."

They talked on for some time, and then Gerald rose to go. The morbid excitement of the day had had its effect upon his nerves, and his feelings as he walked homeward were of acute depression. Out of the chaos of gloomy thoughts regarding the tragedy, there arose in his mind the remembrance of his talk with Nina Penhurst that morning. The recollection even of that, though it lifted him out of the slough of tragic contemplation, brought with it its own peculiar sadness. Why had Nina refused to listen to his protestations of love? That she loved him in return he felt sure. Her eyes, her demeanour, her incautious and qualifying words, all had betrayed that. And yet if she loved him, why had she repelled him? Perhaps, after all, it was but her girlish coyness born of their too brief acquaintance, which had dictated her conduct. At all events, he would speak to her again; he must speak to her again—that very night.

Afternoon tea was brought in almost as soon as he arrived home. But Nina Penhurst was not present.

"She has gone to her room for an hour—she complained of a bad headache," Mrs. Mortimer explained in answer to Gerald's inquiry. "This dreadful discovery which she was so near sharing with you seems to have completely upset her. She suffers from headache a good deal, you know; but it always goes off in an hour or two. She'll be down to dinner."

But Miss Penhurst was not down to dinner. Seven o'clock arrived, and still she put in no appearance. A maid, sent promptly to her room, reported that Miss Penhurst was not there. A rapid search through the house and grounds revealed no sign of her presence. A strange, unfathomable feeling induced Gerald to put on his coat and hat.

"I'll go into the village," he remarked with unreal calmness; "perhaps she's gone shopping."

The village street produced no sign of Nina. Only Mr. Seddon the butcher gave him the slightest clue.

"I couldn't say for sure, sir," he told Gerald, "but I fancy I see the young lady pass two or three hours ago. She carried a small bag with her, sir, and might have been goin' to the station."

To the station went Gerald on the wings of the wind.

"Miss Penhurst, sir?" replied the station-master. "Yes, I saw her go by train this afternoon. Jim"—this to a porter—"what train did Miss Penhurst go by to-day?"

"Miss Penhurst," replied Jim, with a finger to his head; "she went by the 4.10 to Charing Cross, sir!"

The words of the railway porter startled Gerald as they fell upon his ears. In the sum total of Nina Penhurst's action there was, of course, nothing to be surprised at. It was easily conceivable that she might have received an urgent message to proceed to London, and, in any case, she was free to go if she chose.

But why had she departed so unceremoniously from Mrs. Mortimer's household? Why had she, as it were, stolen away, and caught the first train up to London? These were the thoughts that rose unbidden to Gerald's brain, only to be smothered as they framed themselves. For, to question the conduct of the girl to whom he had declared his love only that morning, seemed like sacrilege—seemed like introducing poisonous suspicion where he knew full well there was nothing but complete and sacred trust. Perhaps, he reasoned, there might be an explanatory telegram even now, awaiting his perusal when he arrived home. But there was not. Mrs. Mortimer had not heard a word. On the contrary, she looked up as her son entered, eager for information herself.

"Well," she asked gently, "any news?"

"Miss Penhurst has gone to London," Gerald replied, with a great effort at calmness; "she went by the 4.10."

"Gone to London?"

"Yes; why not, mother?" Gerald answered testily, annoyed that his mother's reception of the news should coincide with his own. "Surely she is entitled to go to London if she pleases."

"Yes, yes, Gerald, I know. But to go without a word; to steal away—to—why has she gone?"

"My dear mother, how on earth should I know?"

"No, of course not. But it's strange—very strange. I wonder if I made a mistake in not taking more trouble about her references when she came here?"

The last words were spoken in a low voice, almost to herself. But they did not fail to fall upon Gerald's alert ears. He looked up sharply.

"What do you mean, mother? Do you quite know what you are saying?"

Mrs. Mortimer glanced quickly at her son.

"You are very irritable and rude to-night, Gerald," she observed quietly.

"You make me! You are so suspicious. Simply because Nina Penhurst absents herself for a few hours, you begin 'wondering' about her references!"

"Well, you know I took her solely on the recommendation of a lady in London, who may possibly not——"

"Not exist!" finished Gerald, rising and pacing the room in his irritation; "say it, mother—say it right out! Say that she's a fraud! Good Heavens! how you women distrust one another."

Mrs. Mortimer did not reply for a moment. She disliked anything resembling a quarrel, and she could see that Gerald was angry and ill at ease.

"I am not suspicious of Miss Penhurst, and I certainly do not think her a fraud," she remarked quietly, after the pause; "I merely said that I thought her conduct in going to London very strange." With which bit of truly feminine casuistry, the discussion for the time ended.

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CHAPTER VI.

In which Gerald Mortimer Steals and Destroys a Certain Letter.

Although Mrs. Mortimer's comments on the disappearance of Miss Penhurst were indicative of only mild suspicion, the same reticence was not observable among the inhabitants of Moulstone the next morning.

The news had got about as such things do, and the disappearance of the governess was made into a peg on which to hang some very serious suspicions indeed.

In an ordinary English village so few exciting incidents occur, that, when one does, it is seized upon with an eagerness rarely noticeable in towns. And when two strange things happen on the same day, it is almost inevitable that the gap dividing them will be bridged over, and a connection established between the two, if such a thing be at all possible.

Now the ghastly discovery of a dead man among the castle ruins had set the gossiping tongues of Moulstone wagging as they had not wagged for years; and when, on the top of that, came the report of Miss Penhurst's disappearance, all previous local records of gossiping went by the board. The inquest on the discovered body, held that particular morning, had divulged the fact that the dead and mutilated man had been a victim of strychnia poisoning, and a verdict of "Murder by a person or persons unknown" had been duly returned. Upon hearing which, the inhabitants of Moulstone, almost to a man, had construed Nina Penhurst's disappearance into a "flight," and with one accord had jumped to the conclusion that the "murder" and "flight" were a most obvious matter of cause and effect.

"I was one o' the last to see 'er," remarked old Asher Seddon, the butcher, to a few cronies in the bar-parlour of "The Plough," that morning; "p'raps *the* last, barrin' the railway folks. I see 'er a-'urryin' past, opposite my shop, fer all the world—as I told Mr. Gerald Mortimer last night—like a thief."

Asher Seddon had told Mr. Gerald Mortimer nothing of the sort, but subsequent events had quickened his imagination.

"Like a thief, eh, Asher?—you see 'er 'urryin' like a thief, did ye now—Ah!" observed William Loppidge, the landlord, with the keenest interest apparent in his manner. "And you told Mr. Gerald that?"

"Miss Penhurst," replied Jim, with a finger to his head; "she went by the 4.10 to Charing Cross, sir."

"I did, William. 'You don't 'appen to ev seen Miss Penhurst pass 'ere?' sez Mr. Gerald. 'But I *do* 'appen to ev seen 'er,' I sez; 'I see 'er in the dusk,' I sez, 'a-makin' fer the station fer all the world like a thief.' Them was my very words." And Asher Seddon drowned whatever qualms his unveracious statements may have caused in the pint pot before him.

"She was dressed quiet, and only carried a bit of a bag wi' 'er," the butcher continued, waxing eloquent as he observed how closely his audience followed his every word. "And she was a-'urryin' that quick, you know, that I sez to myself, 'There's summat wrong,' I sez, 'summat grievous wrong, as sure as my beef ain't mutton.' 'Ow true my words ev come you all know

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now, and if she don't know more about this murder than she'd care to tell—well, I'm done!"

He took another pull at his tankard as he concluded, buried his clenched fists deep in his pockets, pressed his lips together firmly, and shook his head sagely. His listeners in their turn took pulls at their tankards and shook their heads sagely. All except one, a sturdy, sandy-whiskered man of about forty, who sat smoking his clay pipe in dignified silence in the corner.

He was the village constable, at this moment off duty, and dressed in plain clothes.

"And what might be your opinion of it all, Mr. Gupsey?" inquired the landlord after a pause, turning to where the policeman sat.

The constable took a couple of dignified puffs at his pipe before replying.

"If so be as I was one of yourselves," he remarked a little severely, "I might have *opinions*. As a hofficer of the law I ask for *facks*. I'll allow as there's a certain amount of theory about Mr. Seddon's evidence, so to speak. She was dressed quiet, he sez, and that shows me she wished to escape observation. The bag, again, was small, which signified—what? That she was in an 'urry. Oh, yes, there's theory in what Mr. Seddon sez—that is, to a trained mind," and the constable cocked a thumb towards his head, as who should say that therein was contained a very highly-trained mind indeed. "But," continued the officer, and in the qualifying conjunction there was an infinity of significance—"theory ain't good enough, because it ain't facks. Howsomever, theory in this case may develop into facks, and then—why, we shall be under the painful necess'ty o' puttin' the 'andcuffs on 'er pretty wrists." And Police-constable Gupsey crossed his own hands in appropriate pantomime.

Such was the talk in Moulstone at this particular time, and it was little wonder that the long and mischievous tongue of gossip should penetrate to the home of the Mortimers. It did, sure enough, and to such purpose that, finding herself that afternoon once more alone with her son, and with Miss Penhurst's absence the sole theme of their talk, Mrs. Mortimer gave utterance to the significant query:

"Gerald, do you know what they are saying?"

The young man (his whole soul in agony with the dull ache of suspense regarding the absence of his loved one, and his temper attuned to that degree of irritability which is generally the accompaniment of blighted love) looked up quickly.

"What who are saying?" he demanded; "and about what?"

"What the people are saying about—about Miss Penhurst. I should have thought you would have heard."

"I have spoken scarcely a word to anybody to-day—what are they saying? How dare they say anything about—Miss Penhurst?"

Gerald's manner was one of fierce indignation. His mother hesitated a moment, then replied quietly:

"People will talk, you know—they are connecting Miss Penhurst's absence with——" She caught sight of her son's raised eyes, and stopped.

"Well," he demanded sternly, "out with it, mother! What are they connecting her absence with?"

There was no refusing his peremptory demand, no temporising with a son who looked as he looked then. She concluded her sentence.

"They are connecting her absence with the murder of the man at the asylum," she said.

Gerald leapt out of his chair.

"Then they are a lot of fools!" he fumed, "or worse; and they who give credence to such talk are encouraging the vilest of slanders. You, mother, surprise me to the utmost by repeating such a gross calumny."

"But I merely——"

He waved her interruption aside hastily.

"There is no excuse," he pursued; "no excuse whatever. However strange Miss Penhurst's absence may seem, it has nothing to do with—with the other affair. Do you hear, mother?" he cried fiercely; "nothing to do with it whatever. . . . Yes, come in!" The last words were in answer to a knock on the door. A servant entered, a trifle excitedly, with a letter.

"For Mrs. Mortimer," she explained, as Gerald darted eagerly forward and seized it. The maid moved to the fireplace, taking up the hearth-brush, and made as though to linger.

"Don't wait now, Mary," Mrs. Mortimer said, in answer to a quick sign from her son; "you can do that presently."

The door opened and shut behind the servant.

"It's for you, mother," Gerald whispered, passing the letter eagerly, "and it's from her—from Miss Penhurst!"

Mrs. Mortimer seized the missive, tore open the envelope, and unfolded the sheet of paper it contained. As she quickly scanned the writing, her brow contracted, and her eyes looked troubled. The letter fell to her side, and she looked towards the window.

"Mother, what is it? What does she say?" Gerald burst out. "Can't you see I am in suspense? May I look at the letter?"

He took it from her unresisting hand. It contained but a few lines. This is what he read:

> "Dear Mrs. Mortimer,—I can never hope you will forgive me for my ingratitude in going away as I have done, after all your great kindness to me. But believe me when I say that to go was my only course. Some day, when perchance you may know all, you will pity me. Meanwhile, I pray you and all at the Manor House, to think the best of me you can. If I give you no reasons and offer no excuses for my strange conduct, remember it is because circumstances are such that I cannot. For me silence seems the best—nay, the only course. Good-bye for ever. Let my prayer be that if you cannot forgive, you will try to forget
>
> "Nina Penhurst."

There was no date—no address. Only the postmark was there to show that it had been dispatched from "London, W.C."

Gerald read it through and through. As he read, the words of the letter seemed to dance before his sight; everything in the room whirled round and round. His mother spoke.

"What do you think of it, Gerald—isn't it a very strange letter?" she asked.

But Gerald did not answer. He had set down the letter with quavering hand, and had walked, or rather staggered, to the door. His face was white; his mouth rigid; his eyes fixed in a stony stare. He spoke without turning as he reached the door.

"I shall be back later," he said, and disappeared. He was out of the house in three or four seconds; out of the grounds a minute later, in the quiet and seclusion of a lane. Why he was here he did not realise. He realised nothing. Instinct alone had driven him outdoors; an inherent, unthought out desire for coolness to beat upon his fevered head—and to be alone. His mind was in a turmoil, his mental impressions in a mad, seething jumble. He walked on and on, at first with no end in view, yet wanting everything—comfort of soul. Then gradually, as the keen January air met his face, his mind grew cooler, his thoughts more coherent. The words of that letter recurred to him again and again. They seemed burnt into his brain.

"If I give no reasons and offer no excuses for my strange conduct, remember it is because *circumstances are such that I cannot. For me silence seems the best—nay, the only course.*"

What did it all mean? Why did his own thoughts italicise those special phrases? Why did he instinctively

conjure up a connection between them and his mother's account of the current village gossip? Even as he thought, he tried to strangle the vile suspicion that would come. He called himself and thought himself base, and yet by some strange freak of mental volition, suspicion came persistently, seemingly in opposition to the will.

"Why does foul suspicion arise when I know there is no ground for it? Oh, Nina, my love, my love, why have you gone, why have you gone from me?"

He had walked quite a distance by now, and was only recalled to himself by the sight of the asylum gates, at which he had unwittingly arrived. He passed in. Something new might have occurred since the morning. In any case a chat with his friend Dr. Branksome would afford him mental relief. By the time he had turned off from the broad gravel drive and traversed the side path leading to the doctor's apartments, he had recovered control of himself.

There was little sign of his recent agitation, as, for the second time that day, he met his friend.

"Well," he inquired, "any more developments?"

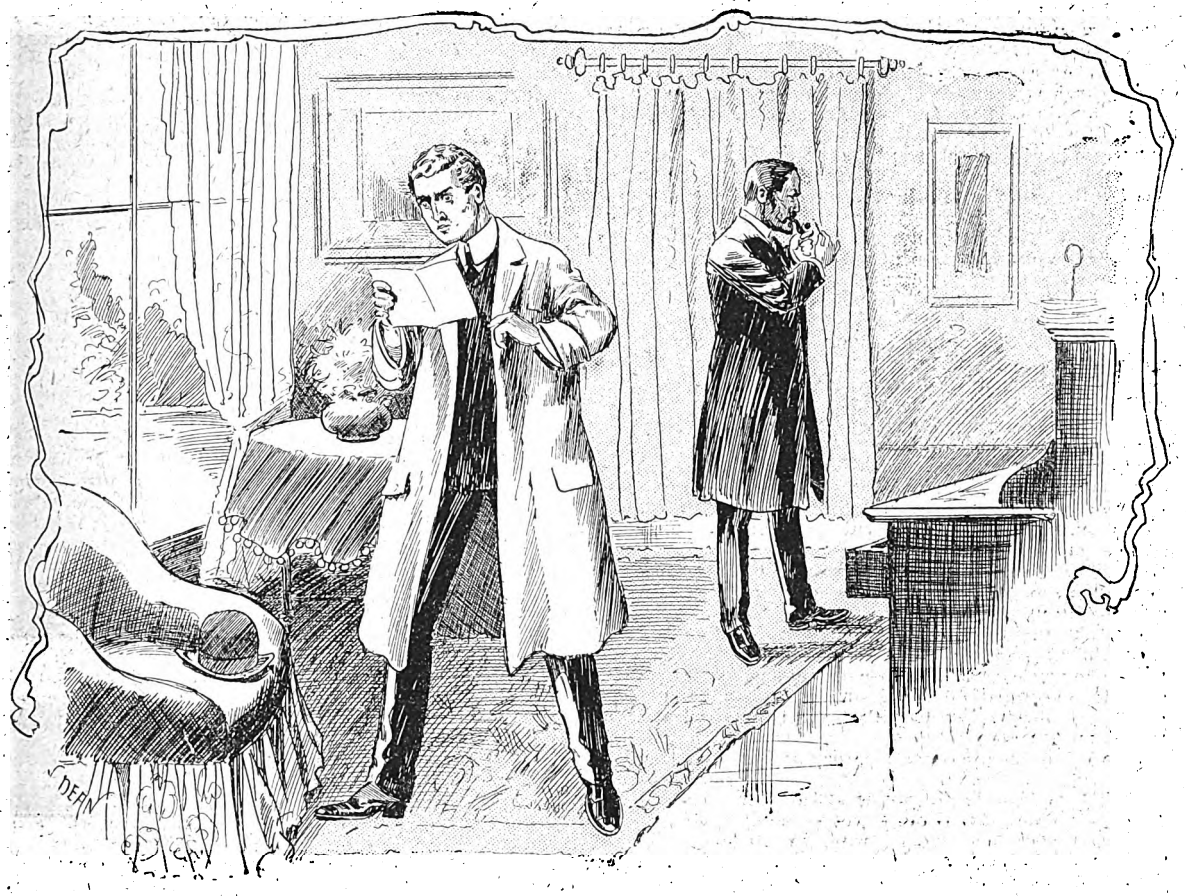
Dr. Branksome stepped across to a desk in a corner of the room. "Yes," he said, as he pulled open a drawer, "I've just received a letter!"

"A letter?"

"Yes; an anonymous letter which may afford a clue. It is addressed to me, and it comes from London. This is what it says:

"'The writer is unacquainted with the rules of Moulstone Asylum, but knowing of the discovery of the body of Felix Cordelvin, is anxious that no difficulty shall arise with regard to the burial. The writer, therefore, begs to inclose the sum of twenty pounds to defray expenses of the same, and to obviate the necessity of parish assistance.'

"There, what do you think of that?"



Perhaps it was well for Gerald that he was unobserved as he looked at the sheet of paper. For, as he did so he turned pale and his legs trembled under him.

"Who sends it?" asked Gerald.

"My dear chap, that's for the police to discover. I've already told you it's anonymous. There's no address, but there's twenty pounds—in bank-notes, observe—and, as the advertising pugilists say, money talks. But here's the note—see if you're detective enough to gather anything from it. I say it's a woman's writing."

He handed the letter to Gerald as he spoke, and turned away to light his pipe while the latter perused it. Perhaps it was well for Gerald that he was unobserved as he looked at the sheet of paper. For, as he did so, he turned pale, and his legs trembled under him. With a great effort he controlled himself.

"It's rather queer," was all he remarked, as he handed the letter back to the doctor.

Branksome replaced the letter in his desk.

"I have great hopes," he said, as he closed the drawer, "that it will afford a clue to the police. It's from a woman, don't you—— Oh! hullo?"

His words had been interrupted by the sudden opening of the door.

"Excuse me, Branksome," observed a young man in spectacles, pushing the door half open, "didn't know you were engaged; but that chap you were examining this morning has gone off in another fit, and I don't quite know what to make of him."

"All right, Myers, I'll come with you," Dr. Branksome replied. "Excuse me, Mortimer—I shall be back in a few minutes." And he departed with his medical colleague.

With eyes almost starting from his head Gerald gazed for a moment at the door as it closed behind the two doctors. Then his hands sought his throbbing temples.

"From her!" he gasped; "from Nina! Heavens, and Branksome is going to hand the letter over to the police. No, no, he must not! She is innocent—I swear she is innocent; but this anonymous letter in the hands of the police! No, they must not have it."

He stepped to the desk as he spoke, pulled out the drawer with trembling hand, and once more held the letter.

"Nina's handwriting!" he whispered hoarsely to himself, "there's no doubt of that. Fortunately, Branksome is unable to recognise it. Nobody else must see it!" He sprang towards the bright fire, and, bending down, thrust the letter among the living coals.

Then as he watched the greedy flames swallow the incriminating sheet of paper, he rose erect, and murmured:

"Thank Heaven!"

But directly he had completed the destruction, the full significance of the act rushed upon him. Branksome would be back presently, and then—what would happen? His friend would miss the letter, would question him about it! What could he say? He could not admit his guilt. To do so would be to strengthen the doctor's suspicion against the writer of the letter. And he could not face his friend Branksome at this moment with a lie on his lips. He must have time to think out a course of conduct. He must go before Branksome returned. Merely waiting to leave a brief message of regret with a servant, he left the room, and a minute or two later was striding towards the Manor House.

CHAPTER VII.

"Alive and Well, and Good for Another Twenty Years."

In the library of Sycamore House, the old mansion on Streatham Hill, to which we have been already introduced, sat two men. One was a tall, broadly-built, and well-preserved man of about fifty, whose clean-shaven face might have been handsome but for the unusual thinness of drooping lips, which gave to it a hard and somewhat sinister appearance.

"Well, Stephen," he remarked to his younger companion, "everything has turned out very well, my son."

The younger man fidgeted in his chair, while his dark, shifty eyes roved around the room apprehensively.

"At present," he replied, "but the thing isn't complete, is it?"

"Why, what more would you have?" inquired the older man. "Is not Anthony Cordelvin alive and well, and so long as he lives have I not the administration of his estate? What more would you have?"

The young man continued to gaze about him uneasily.

"I was thinking of the risk—" he began.

"Risk! Bah! From whom did you inherit that chicken heart of yours, Stephen? I've provided against all risk."

"But there's that doctor—that fellow Manisty. He might—"

"Oh, he won't talk, if that's what you're going to say. He has everything to lose by talking, and nothing whatever to gain. He saw me with a false beard on, and wouldn't recognise me now. And he doesn't know me except under the name of Causton. Moreover, my son, you ought to know by this time that Roderick Vanstone is no fool. I have arranged the whole of this business thoroughly." He paused a minute and puffed at the cigar he was smoking. Then he repeated, looking at his son:

"Yes, I have arranged this business with absolute thoroughness. It took me a long time to plan out the affair, and longer still to execute it. But it's done now. All the trouble might have been saved if you had married that girl."

"Now look here, guv'nor, why do you put it that way? You know I tried my hardest to persuade her."

"H'm, and the fair Nina Penhurst refused you, and rather than endure what she styled your 'persecutions,' bolted from this place and the protection of myself—her lawful guardian. Ah well! I can't help it. She's of age now, and I've no control over her."

"And some day she'll inherit the whole of the Cordelvin property?"

The elder man eyed his son quizzingly.

"Yes," he replied drily; "*some* day. But not during the life of her relative, Anthony Cordelvin. So long as he lives, I administer the estate on his behalf. That was so arranged by the testator because Anthony was mentally incapable of administering it himself."

"I wonder what Nina Penhurst, as next heir, would think if she knew the condition of the estate as administered by her estimable and high-principled guardian, Roderick Vanstone," remarked the younger man cynically.

Roderick Vanstone looked up quickly.

"No sarcasm, Stephen," he said severely; "it comes from you with a very ill grace. Remember, that whatever I have done has been for your sake; you've shared in—in——"

"The plunder!" finished Stephen. "Well, I suppose I have, and I oughtn't to complain. But what a bust-up there'll be some day when Anthony Cordelvin dies, and the solicitors of the next heir examine the estate. What a lot of money there will be unaccounted for."

"Hush, Stephen! Don't talk so loudly." He paused a moment, and then added with stern emphasis: "Anthony Cordelvin mustn't die—he's good for another twenty years."

"Thanks to the—" began Stephen; but the other raised a warning finger, and said:

"I know what you would say; but don't say it. Remember, it is a compact never to mention a certain incident, or rather chain of incidents, even between ourselves." A bead of perspiration was on Roderick Vanstone's forehead as he spoke, though his words were quietly uttered.

"All right, guv'nor, don't get excited. I'm only to remember that Anthony Cordelvin is alive—a poor, demented man, it is true—but alive and well, eh?"

"That's it, my son. Alive and well, and good for another twenty years. Ha! ha!"

And the two exchanged a smile in which there was a whole world of mystery and ghastly significance. Then, lapsing into silence, they puffed softly at their cigars, and fell, each in his own particular way, to thinking.

Roderick Vanstone's thoughts were of the long past—of a period twenty years before. In those old days he had been in practice as a solicitor, and among his clients he had numbered old Mark Cordelvin, a City merchant of vast wealth, and extreme eccentricity of

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character. Years before he had known the old merchant, the latter had married, and had had a son born to him, his wife dying shortly afterwards. In the son, whom he named Anthony, all his fondest hopes and aspirations were centred. Judge, then, of his intense sorrow and chagrin when he discovered that as young Anthony grew up, he gave unmistakable signs of mental decrepitude. With the years his limbs developed, but his brain gave but little indication of growth or increased capability.

Although mortified and bitterly disappointed, old Mark Cordelvin would not hear of having his imbecile son sent away to any institution. He kept him beneath his own roof, tending him with every care, and surrounding him with every comfort and luxury that money could buy.

Later on in his life, when his son was a grown man of thirty, there came into old Mark's care and guardianship the orphaned and infant daughter of one of his few surviving relatives. Eccentric as the old man was, little Nina Penhurst, as she grew to comprehend, had nothing but the tenderest affection for him, and the day on which he died was the bitterest she had ever realised in all her young life. When old Mark Cordelvin's will came to be read, it was found that, apart from a few comparatively unimportant legacies, the whole of his property had been bequeathed to his son Anthony for the remainder of his life, the whole passing, upon his death, into the sole possession of Nina Penhurst.

During Anthony's life, in consequence of his enfeebled mental condition, it was provided that old Mark's lawyer, Roderick Vanstone, should administer the estate and assume the guardianship of little Nina Penhurst. Which provision had been duly carried out, with the result that Roderick Vanstone had manipulated the accounts of the estate, entirely to his own advantage. During the period of his ward's sojourn with him, his son, and Anthony Cordelvin, a violent antipathy to her had been engendered in the breast of the imbecile, a feeling which, for purposes of his own, Roderick Vanstone had done his best to foster. At the same time, he had striven with might and main to bring about feelings of affection on the part of Nina for his son Stephen, his ultimate idea being a marriage between the two. The upshot of all which was that he had awoke one morning in the old house on Streatham Hill, to find that Nina Penhurst had gone, leaving a brief note behind her, to the effect that she would never return.

So ran Roderick Vanstone's train of thought as he sat silently smoking in company with his son—a train of thought that culminated with a further contemplation in detail to "a certain incident, or rather chain of incidents "of which he had so recently forbidden his son to expatiate.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Woman in the Blue Cloak Again.

The brain of Gerald Mortimer was in a whirl as he strode homeward from the asylum. The exciting events of the past few days—the discovery of the dead man, Nina's flight, his own strange encounter with the woman in the blue cloak, recurred to his mind with maddening reiteration. The gossip of the villagers came back to him, and with it the recollection of the strange letter from Nina Penhurst to his mother, which lent colour to brooding suspicion. And then that other—the anonymous letter, addressed to Dr. Branksome, which he had just stolen and destroyed—why, oh, why, had all these circumstances combined to make him doubt his beloved?

Gerald shivered as he mentally reviewed the whole affair, striving to do so deliberately and coolly. No, no; he could not doubt Nina! It was impossible, when he recalled her good and gentle nature.

But though he might not doubt, others would, and those letters were serious—he shivered again as he thought of the phrase—pieces of evidence against her. Well, thank goodness, one letter was out of the way, and he must manage to get possession of the other.

Meantime, in his present state of mind, he could not remain in Moulstone. He felt he must do something. To search for Nina Penhurst in London was hopeless. Besides, he had no right; she had refused to give him the right to be solicitous on her behalf. Yet, at any moment, danger might threaten her. The gathering suspicion might grow, and the authorities might "take steps." If danger threatened her he must be near to avert it if possible. Moreover, for a few days he must keep out of Branksome's way, to avoid awkward inquiries about that letter. He would go to London that night.

He announced his intention to his mother as soon as he arrived home.

"Going to London to-night, Gerald?" she said surprised, "but I thought you weren't going till next week."

"I find I've some business to do, mother," he rejoined; "business that will not wait."

His mother looked at him keenly, as he spoke with forced calmness, but she loved her son too well to provoke him by pressing the matter further.

"Mother," he said, as a few minutes later he stood ready to depart, "have you that letter from Miss Penhurst?"

Mrs. Mortimer, surprised at the abruptness of the question, replied: "Yes; it's in my desk."

"I want you to give it me," he said, and then, seeing her questioning hesitation, added: "No, mother, don't ask me why I want it, but give it me."

She crossed over to her desk, withdrew the letter, and handed it to him without a word.

"Now, my dear mother," he whispered, as he bent down and kissed her good-bye, "I have one more request to make. Don't mention anything about this letter to a soul! Do you hear, mother darling? Nobody must know that you ever received it! Promise!"

His earnestness filled her with wonderment and vague dread, but she did not question. She simply promised what he asked her. A moment later and he was gone.

The evening was well advanced when Gerald alighted from the train at Charing Cross. Outside the station he immediately chartered a cab and drove to his chambers, the Law Courts' clock striking nine just as the vehicle turned into Middle Temple Lane. Nobody having been apprised of his coming, he found his chambers dark and cold, and he merely waited a few minutes ere setting out for the Strand with the idea of getting supper.

That meal over, he lit a cigar and walked out into the street. His mind was too pre-occupied to allow him to take note of where he walked, and pure chance took him on to the Embankment. A fog was coming up from the river as he strolled slowly along, absently gazing over the parapet towards the murky waters. But neither fog nor cold affected him on this night. He was thinking—trying to fashion a plan of action upon which to embark on the morrow. He must find Nina Penhurst; that, at any rate, he was decided on. But how? In this mighty maze of London he might search for a year—for ten years—without result.

"Please excuse me, but could you tell me whereabouts the Temple Station is?"

Gerald swerved round at the words.

"I know it is close by," the voice pursued, "but owing to the fog I am not quite sure where it is."

Gerald did not reply. He tried to, but instead he gasped out an exclamation.

For the voice that addressed him was the voice of a woman. And the woman was the woman with the blue cloak!

(To be continued.)

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At the Concert.

How the Troxtons were Reconciled.

"It has been a mistake," said Nathan Troxton. "It has been a bitter mistake. I cannot see how either of us ever made it. But the sooner we retrieve it the better. Perhaps, after all, I have not quite ruined your life, though you seem to think that I have. As for myself, I defy you to ruin my life. No woman shall do that, or man either!"

"Oh, no!" interposed his wife scornfully, "no one could ruin your life. You are too independent and too selfish. One could lavish one's best love on you and you would never know it. One could hate you and you would not care. I have been angry and out of sympathy with you for weeks at a time, and you did not even suspect it. I'm tired to the soul of living with a galvanised mummy."

"Of course," responded Troxton smilingly, "you naturally would be. Therefore, let us separate without further delay. A divorce is not necessary. I shall have no further use for matrimony, and as for you, I know your scruples much too well to think that you would ever be the wife of another man during my lifetime. Now, I have a proposition to make."

"Yes."

"Let one of us take the child and the other the home. You are to choose. If you take Claribel, then leave me the books and pictures and the other things we have cared for. If you choose the home I will take our daughter and go. The offer is, perhaps, not a generous one. It is not chivalrous. I ought to offer you the home and the child. But I see no reason for being more than just. I have been as unfortunate as you, and see no reason for despoiling myself of everything."

Mary Troxton looked about her at the familiar, beautiful room. The fire danced in the great fireplace; the pictures she and her husband had selected together looked at her from the walls; her chair stood in its accustomed place by the reading-table. Beyond, in the dining-room, she caught the gleam of the china and crystal she had enthusiastically selected in happier days. The beauty and the associations of these material things called to her with a thousand tempting voices. Her face grew white.

"I will take the child," she said. "I choose Claribel."

The next morning, leading her eight-year-old daughter by the hand, she opened the door of her house for the last time. At the ultimate moment she turned and looked back upon her land of lost delights.

"What a pity that we hate each other," she said to her husband. "It is so inconvenient!"

"Isn't it!" he assented. He bowed her out. The latch snapped behind her. She walked to the pavement, holding the little girl by the hand. One more look backward escaped her, and she gave a sharp cry.

"My home, my home!" she said.

"Mamma, you hurt my hand so," sobbed Claribel. "Why do you talk so? I don't want to go walking. I want to go back to the nursery and play with my dolls."

Inside the house a man flung himself, face downward, upon a couch and cried:

"My little girl! My little girl! How am I going to live without my little girl?"

* * * * *

Ten years later Mary Troxton and her daughter entered the Queen's Hall one Friday afternoon for the pleasure of listening to a concert by a celebrated orchestra. Mary Troxton walked with the independent step of one who is in the habit of walking alone. There was a clear and sad light in her grey eyes. Her brow had grown loftier than it had been in the days of her youth. Dignity and patience and kindliness spoke in her every feature. As she moved along in her violet-coloured garments, no woman in the audience that day, young or old, had a personality so appealing and so picturesque.

About her young daughter there appeared to be something unfulfilled. The face wore an expression of longing—not the vague and enchanting restlessness of a young girl, but something suggestive of more definite regret and deprivation. With the frank disregard of beauty which the young can afford to assume, the girl had costumed herself in black. Black plumes shaded her face; her little chin was hidden in her sombre furs, and the delicate hand with which she pressed down her chair was gloved in black.

This slender hand caught the casual glance of a gentleman occupying the next seat, and he followed it with his eyes till it rested on the owner's lap. Still its fragile contour held him, as if it awakened memories, and he sat staring at it idly, with no care, apparently, to lift his eyes higher.

He was a man of middle age, prematurely grey, with a serious and intellectual face, and the manner of one who is weary with too much work or responsibility.

It was not till after the music had begun and one of the too obvious descriptive symphonies of a certain modern composer began to make its insistent way into the comprehension of the audience, that he chose to lift his his eyes. When he beheld the face of the young girl next him a strange and comprehending light stole into his face, and his fixed regard caused the girl to return his look.

For a moment perplexity had its way with her. Then an expression of awe—almost fright—appeared in her eyes. Then, quietly and naturally, the two knew

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themselves for father and daughter, meeting after ten years.

There was no need for Claribel's soft pressure on her mother's arm to make her acquainted with the fact that Nathan Troxton sat there beside them. She had noticed him when she stood in the aisle waiting for her daughter to precede her. A mist clouded her sight, and it seemed to her for a moment as if death were actually knocking at her house of life. But she forced herself to calmness and seated herself.

It was fate, no doubt. From the day she had left her own home she had not lived in London. For a time she and her daughter had known peaceful English country life; for years she had lived in a quiet, beautiful Sussex village, where Claribel had attended school. For the first time she had returned to London. What likelihood, she had asked herself, was there of meeting Nathan Troxton in a city of five million souls? Yet here, on the first occasion on which she ventured into a public place, she met him! It was fate, without doubt.

The music had changed. The orchestra was giving to the people the most reverent thoughts of a master. True and sweet and comforting was the serene major harmony, and the dew of its beauty fell into the very cisterns of the heart. In the trembling young girl in the sable garments it awoke a world of tenderness. The longing and dissatisfaction from which she had suffered took concrete form in her elated imagination.

It was her father that she wanted—her father's love, her father's guidance, his authority! As the rivulets of spring dance down the hillside to find the river, so her soul sought that of her father. The music, "yearning like a god in pain," impelled her to indulge in an exquisite impulse.

She slipped the glove from her warm and quivering fingers and laid them softly—softly as a kiss—within the hand of the man beside her. On his part there was a second's hesitation as if the faithful nerves of his hand had not told his aching heart the truth. Then, with a grasp, such as a sinful one might take upon an angel's robe, he closed his hand upon that of the girl, and over the two spread a happiness like the balm of a starlit summer night.

The concert ended in time. The three rose. They faced each other. Each looked beautiful to the eyes of the rest. The crowd passed along the aisles. It would have been profane to have said anything commonplace. Yet it was no place for an extraordinary word. It was Claribel who first found courage to speak.

"It is strange that you knew me," she said to her father. "Tell me, was it your eyes or your heart that first informed you who I was?"

"I cannot tell. But now that we have met, are we to part?" His eyes asked the question of the elder woman, though it was the younger one he addressed.

"Nathan Troxton," said his wife, "let the girl have her rights. She wants you, and needs you. Take her home with you for a time."

"But you must come too, Mary. Come, life is going fast. Let us be at peace. What were the old feuds? I have forgotten what they were all about. I only remember how lonely I am."

"Who am I," said Mary Troxton, with those divine melodies of the master still ringing in her soul, "that I should refuse to walk the path appointed for my feet?"

So they went out together—those three—into the street, and so home.

F. C. Liston.

DOMESTIC PAPER-HANGING.

How Mrs. Smith tried Papering a Room.

Mrs. Smith is very economical. So the other day when she and Mr. Smith were talking about house-cleaning, and the painting and papering that had to be done, a bright thought as usual occurred to Mrs. Smith, and says she:

"Now, what's the use of paper-hangers to put that paper on? I can do it myself, just as well as they, and we will thereby save the cost and all the bother of having them, and I'm going to do it."

Mr. Smith at first remonstrated, though in a feeble vein; but Mrs. Smith gave signs of bursting into tears, and he knew the consequences thereof, so he relapsed into silence and let her have her way. That afternoon Mrs. Smith set out to look for wall paper, and bought some.

Next morning she was up bright and early, and after breakfast prepared to hang the paper. Her first move was to make some paste, and then she took time to get the children off to school, after which she took time to consider. She knew she could do those three rooms before tea time easily enough.

So, after she had rested awhile, she unrolled the paper, and measured a length, and cut it off at the right place.

Then she spread it on the table, and looked round for something to put the paste on with, and suddenly bethought herself of her husband's hat-brush, which was a nice soft brush, and she took it out and commenced. She put on plenty of paste, so that it would be sure to stick, and then arose the query, how was she to get up to put it on the wall, a trifle over eight feet high?

Looking round a good idea struck her; she would take the wash-stand, and set a long-legged stool on that, and by dint of reaching she could do the thing nicely. So she struggled, and puffed, and pulled, and lifted the wash-stand, and set it down on her toes and pinched them, and tore her dress.

After a while she got the wash-stand where she wanted it, and set the stool upon it, and took the paper, first doubling the end over, and started to mount the extemporised pyramid. She got up all right, and balanced very well, and tried to stick the paper on.

But it wouldn't stick very well, having grown weak from long-endured soaking, and it suddenly parted at the corner and dropped with a "clish" on the floor. Then she got down and emphatically gathered it up and cast it out, and pasted another strip, and climbed her ladder of fame and stuck the paper on the wall. To be sure it was wrinkled, but she thought she could straighten it out all right by gentle pulling.

So she went to get down, and just as she was taking the last step the old stool gave a lurch, in consequence of one leg sliding off the corner of the stand, and she made a sudden ignominious descent, and landed with one foot in the pail of paste, and balanced there for a moment, somewhat as the ballet girl does, and then the pail overturned, and so did Mrs. Smith, and bumped her head on the floor, and then slowly and solemnly that strip of paper slid off the wall to the floor on top of her, and Mrs. Smith arose.

She just took off her paste-trimmed garments, and she laid her shoe away, and she cleaned the room up sooner than she ever did before in her life, and rolled up the paper and got all ready for the paper-hangers. Then she got dinner ready and when Mr. Smith came she told him to send them up. But that was all she told.

H. T. F.

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The Greatest Discovery of the Century.

For seven hours Dr. Bellingham has sat leaning slightly forward in his red morocco chair, his body absolutely rigid. His thin lips are pressed firmly together, his whole face is livid except for two burning spots below his cheek bones, and his knees occasionally jog against the laboratory table, making the oil in the reading-lamp swing, and the whole room tremble almost imperceptibly.

At last the little brass clock on the mantelpiece strikes five. His vigil is ended. At the sound, startling in that death-like stillness, the rabbit which the doctor has been holding in his moist hands wriggles. Instinctively Dr. Bellingham tightens his grasp, but as the last musical vibration dies away the terrified creature slips through his fingers and falls with a thud on the carpet.

The doctor's head drops forward on his arms, and the rabbit lies at his feet forgotten. Its great brown eyes are fixed on its tormentor with a look of fearful horror, and its long ears are pressed back until they are almost lost to sight in the fur.

Occasionally the animal starts up with a cry of pain, throws its head back, opens it eyes more widely, panting and wriggling, while its whole body is shaken with spasms and convulsions. Gradually, however, it grows weaker and weaker, its respiration becomes slower, and it falls into a kind of stupor.

At last the doctor raises his head and laughs softly to himself.

There is a faint smell of chloroform in the room, and the dark patches of blood on the table, the chisel and mallet, the electrical appliances, and the large cylindrical glass case containing iron pincers and claws with which the operator may grip at pleasure any part of the captive animal's body, and lacerate and crush it, indicates the nature of the sufferings from which death had not yet relieved the mangled victim of the vivisectionist.

The doctor pushes his chair back and rises slowly. The window is open and he walks towards it, reviving as the cold air plays on his burning forehead.

It is done at last. The great physiological secret on which he has staked fifteen years of his life and a fortune can baffle him no longer. He holds in his hand a new key to life. The enchanted paths of the garden of science which he has trod so faithfully have led him to the fountain of healing and knowledge, and it is in his power to relieve half the world of its most terrible and inevitable suffering.

He presses his hand against the icy glass and then puts his forehead to it. His brain is throbbing. The dazzling prospect of immortal fame multiplies the sweets of his reward until they overwhelm him. After all, it is for this that he has sacrificed so much, it is for this that he has morally divorced his wife that he may wed himself body and soul and strength to his laboratory.

He is so deep in his own thoughts that he does not hear the door open, nor notice the pale-faced woman who creeps in on tiptoe.

She has thrown a shawl hastily across her shoulders, and her long black hair is falling in luxurious waves down her back. For fifteen years she has never ventured across the threshold of that room, and she cannot resist one curious look at the table and the glass cupboards filled with scientific instruments, before she breathes her husband's name in a terrified whisper.

The doctor twists round with a little cry, and instinctively his guilty eyes are turned on the rabbit, which still crouches half-hidden beneath his chair. His white cheeks suddenly flush like a man discovered in the very commission of a crime, and he springs forward with a furious gesture.

"Maria!" he cries, "how dare you come in here against my orders—how dare you!"

His wife's eyes flash with indignation. She leans back against the table and stares at him defiantly.

"I came here to see what you were doing," she says at last, speaking slowly. "It will soon be morning now, and I am tired of waiting."

The doctor's one idea is to get her out of the room.

"Go back to bed," he says sternly. "I have finished now—finished for ever."

"What do you mean?"

She listens intently, her blue eyes wide open, her breath coming in quick, short gasps as he tells her of the great scientfic era which has dawned.

He grows eloquent as he speaks of the theme which fills his heart, and a great longing steals over him to find someone who will share his happiness. It is too much for him to bear alone. He forgets his caution and his anger at his wife's intrusion in that sacred room; he forgets everything except the great discovery and all it means to him, all it promises for suffering humanity.

He holds out his arms, but she shrinks back from him.

"It is all very well," she says scornfully, "you come to me now that your work is finished; but you never came before. Your hobby has brought you fame, and at last you have time to think of me, who have been standing aside for fifteen years, and paying for you. Have you

no words of thanks for my fortune which you have squandered in paving your way to immortality? Have you no thought for my feelings which you have used as a pile on which to raise the monument of your ambition above the quagmire of poverty's inevitable failure?

"Do you know how my heart has been bleeding all these years for a token of your love? No! no! You are blind to everything but your own success in life, and I—I am a fool who trusted in a man."

The doctor stands with his hands still half outstretched, cowed by his wife's vehemence. He has never heard her speak like this before, although he has often feared that in her heart of hearts she must know that he married her for her money. And yet at this moment he feels that he could love her. In her anger she is more beautiful than she has ever seemed to him before, blinded with his absorbing interest in the cause of science.

She listens to all he has to say, at first with calm indifference tinged with scorn, but gradually her heart softens, and her love for the man who is pleading before her overcomes every other feeling.

She holds out her white hands to him, and in another moment he would have taken her in his arms, when a rustle behind them makes them both start.

"What was that?" Maria asks, holding her breath, and looking round the room in terror.

The doctor has forgotten the rabbit which is just awakening from its stupor. It raises its head, and then utters a plaintive cry.

"Maria!" he cries, "how dare you come in here against my orders—how dare you!"

In a moment his wife is down on her knees beside the little creature, and as she sees the blood which still clots its coat she realises for the first time the cruel experiments with a living creature by which her husband has made his great discovery.

"Put that rabbit down!" cries the doctor. His heart is beating fast, and he trembles to think what his wife may do now that she has discovered this secret which he has guarded from her so zealously for fifteen years.

"Is this how you have spent your time, in torturing animals? Is this how you have gratified your lust for cruelty?" she asks, her eyes blazing with fury, and her white hand tightly clenched.

"My dear child," he begins, "it was necessary for the sake of humanity. It is neither cruel nor unjustifiable when it is done in the interests of science. Would you have had me experiment on human beings? These dumb animals are invaluable auxiliaries in researches of the intricate and delicate nature which I have been making. I——"

He stops, for his wife has risen and is standing before him.

"And was it in the interests of science that you left the poor creature lying there in agony?" she asks breathlessly.

"The longer the creature lives the more certain are the results of the discovery which I have made. There is no need for all this excitement, Maria. If you take my advice you will go back to your bedroom and calm yourself."

His wife stoops down and examines the deep wounds in the little creature. Tears of infinite compassion fill her eyes as it wriggles at her touch.

Then turning her head slightly away she takes the rabbit up by its ears and gives it one quick decisive blow with the side of her hand which puts it out of its misery for ever.

"There," she says, as she lays it almost reverently on the carpet. "Have you got any more of them?"

Her husband groans. She looks up at him, and her whole frame suddenly shakes with a tremendous hysterical storm of passion.

"No, no! don't touch me," she cries, as the doctor springs to her side. "Go away. My abhorrence for a vivisector had almost made me hate my husband."

* * * * *

A direful purpose, born of a fixed idea, has taken hold of the doctor.

If his wife would only relent. If he could only persuade her to throw prejudice on one side in the cause of science, on behalf of her sex, having thought for his great ambition.

He has coaxed, he has stormed, he has raved, he has even stooped to flattery, but her mind is made up. Not another penny of hers shall ever be spent on developing the great discovery which is to make the whole world echo with praises of his name.

The doctor is perfectly aware that without his wife's consent he can never hope to reach the dazzling horizon

which has opened before him—unless—yes, unless she dies.

Fate seems to be dealing very hardly with him. The scattered speculations of fifteen years' hard study have taken definite shapes at last only to mock his ambition. The theory with which he has wrestled has been revealed; vague surmises and wild hypotheses have become absolute certainties; a lifetime of patient labour and minute scientific investigation has led to the greatest discovery of the century.

His heaven is flushed with the dawn of a new epoch in medical science, but the shadow of his wife's resentment intervenes.

The doctor is sitting once more in the red morocco chair at his laboratory table. A newspaper is lying crumpled at his elbow, his head is thrown back, his eyes are closed. His thoughts are so inhuman that he has not the moral courage to face them, and his brain is working almost mechanically and under protest, so to speak.

At the first blush it would seem impossible that we could cheat ourselves, and yet there are times in the life of every man when he deliberately deceives his own conscience. It is easily done. Our thoughts and actions run away with us, and we stand by, as it were, and wash our hands of the whole business.

It is with something like a sigh of despair that Doctor Bellingham opens his eyes and suddenly catches sight of his wife sitting in the garden under the shade of a big acacia-tree, and evidently waiting for him before pouring out tea.

He gets up quickly, and taking a folding-chair under his arm he lets himself out through the open window on to the smooth, well-kept lawn.

"Maria," he says, as he settles himself down by her side and empties some strawberries on to his plate, "I'm thinking of going away for a few weeks."

"Going away?" in a voice of evident surprise. "Whatever for?"

"Something very much like virulent typhoid has broken out at a little place called Wentfield, about twenty miles from here, and——"

"But what in the world has that got to go with you? They have their own doctors surely?"

"That's just it. They haven't. The place is twenty miles from the nearest town. I'm going there to see what I can do."

His wife looks at him closely for a minute, and then she holds out her hand for his cup.

"When do you mean to start?" she says, with a little shrug.

"To-night."

"To-night! You might have given me a little longer notice. However, I will be ready."

"You!" with well feigned astonishment and a smile of ridicule.

"You don't mean to say that you acutally thought I was going to be left behind?"

"Certainly, my dear child," says the doctor.

At this moment the footman arrived with some hot water, and Dr. Bellingham's reply is evidently meant to reach his ears.

"Nothing would induce me to give my permission to your accompanying me. A doctor must run the risk of infection, and to a certain extent he grows hardened to it. He must not allow himself to think of danger; but a frail woman like you—no, Maria, you must stop at home, whatever happens."

"A wife's place is at her husband's side."

"You are very thoughtful for a woman who has ruined my life," says the doctor with sudden bitterness.

Mrs. Bellingham turns her head away.

"We will not reopen that discussion, if you please," she says firmly. "Will you have some more tea?"

The doctor seldoms takes more than two cups, but he makes an exception this afternoon. He dreads going back to his studies, to be alone with his conscience.

For a long time he sits there ridiculing his wife's intention of following him to Wentfield, and finally he gives in with apparent despair.

"If you will have your own way I suppose you must," he says brutally. "I cannot do more than warn you of the terrible danger you are running."

Then he gets up and walks towards the house, trying hard to make himself believe he really hopes she will not go.

"I've done all I can to dissuade her," he keeps on muttering to himself, and all the time he knows that were it not for his opposition she would never have wanted to go at all.

His breath has been fanning the flame his conscience bids him extinguish, and he says to himself it is not his fault if it won't go out.

* * * * *

For three weeks Dr. Bellingham has been working among the poor of Wentfield. The plague is still raging with unabated fury, and although another doctor and a Sister of Mercy have followed his noble example they can do little except to alleviate the suffering and institute precautions to prevent the germs spreading more rapidly than they do from house to house.

In the great work he is doing the doctor almost contrives to forget his shattered hopes and the sinful purpose which really prompted him to enlist his sympathies in the cause of these poor village people.

And yet from day to day he watches his wife with eager anxiety, and wonders how much longer it will be before she falls a victim to the disease in the midst of which she moves and lives unharmed.

At first he will not acknowledge even to himself that it is not her death but her escape which he dreads, although he sometimes goes so far as to say that if it were the other way round a man would be justified in sacrificing one life for the sake of thousands of human beings. The perfection of his great scientific discovery would reduce the mortality of the world nearly twenty per cent., and that perfection is simply waiting because of a woman's repugnance to vivisection.

Sometimes he says to himself that a man who would sacrifice his love for the sake of his duty would deserve to be canonised. He dwells upon these thoughts with a strange admixture of pleasure and loathing, and all the time he is working among the poor, who turn in the street to bless him as he moves among them like an angel of mercy.

Then the time comes when he is compelled to meet his own thoughts. He confesses to himself that it is his duty to sacrifice his wife upon the altar of physiology as he has sacrificed the lives of animals on his vivisecting table, but he will not admit that this same altar has been raised in the sanctuary of his ambition.

Upon a day he discovers that certain drugs taken internally produce the same deadly effect upon the human constitution as the microscopic germs of the disease which is decimating the people of Wentfield. Then he can no longer cloak his criminal intentions. Nature has failed to remove the thorn from his side, although he has tempted Death with a fragile bait;

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and when he confesses this he stands confessed a criminal in all but deed.

So cleverly has he deceived himself in the past, that the revelation of his direful purpose is almost a shock to him; but it is not long before he grows reconciled to the idea of destroying his wife.

Breakfast is on the table, and his wife is not down. The doctor places a chair against the door. If anyone should come in suddenly this would give him a moment's warning. Then he pours out two cups of coffee, and as he places one by his wife's plate he drops in a few grains of white powder, which float for a minute on the top and then slowly dissolve.

At this moment Mrs. Bellingham comes in. She suspects nothing, or the terrified look on her husband's face could not have escaped her attention. The morning greetings are hardly over when the door is thrown open and the landlady bursts into the room, her face white as death. She looks towards the doctor, and then turns significantly to Mrs. Bellingham.

"Can I speak to you for a minute, sir?"

The doctor rises with a perplexed look and follows the woman out into the passage.

Mrs. Bellingham half rises from her chair, then she sits down again, and raises her coffee to her lips. As she does so she notices a little island of bubbles floating on the top.

"Frank must have given me his coffee," she says to herself, fishing for what she supposed was sugar and finding it dissolved. Then she changed the cups and the doctor came in, his face haggard and his lips bloodless.

He gives one quick look at his wife's cup, and as she does so she raises it to her lips.

"Dr. Raymond is down with the plague," he says, in a voice which sounded strangly unnatural even to himself. "I must be off at once. No, I can't stay for any breakfast."

He snatches up his cup of coffee, drinks it eagerly, and then rushes out of the room, and his wife hears him going downstairs three steps at the time.

* * * * * *

Two hours later Dr. Bellingham is lying by the side of his fellow-worker, tossing from side to side on a bed of fever, and suffering all the terrible internal agonies of the plague.

The Sister of Mercy is watching by their bedsides with a look of infinite compassion, and she vaguely wonders how long it will be before her turn comes.

She sends a messenger off to the nearest town with an urgent letter to the doctor, and then she returns to watch over the sufferers in the long, dimly-lit barn which has been turned into a temporary hospital.

Terrible as Dr. Bellingham's physical sufferings are they seem nothing to him compared with his mental agony. Summoned to his death-bed in the very commission of a crime, repentance seems impossible.

If he had seen his wife lying dead repentance would have been easy enough, but to repent before the deed is done and not be able to stop it! It is impossible to realise the intensity of his despair. So far as he could guess the time his wife would still be in full possession of her health.

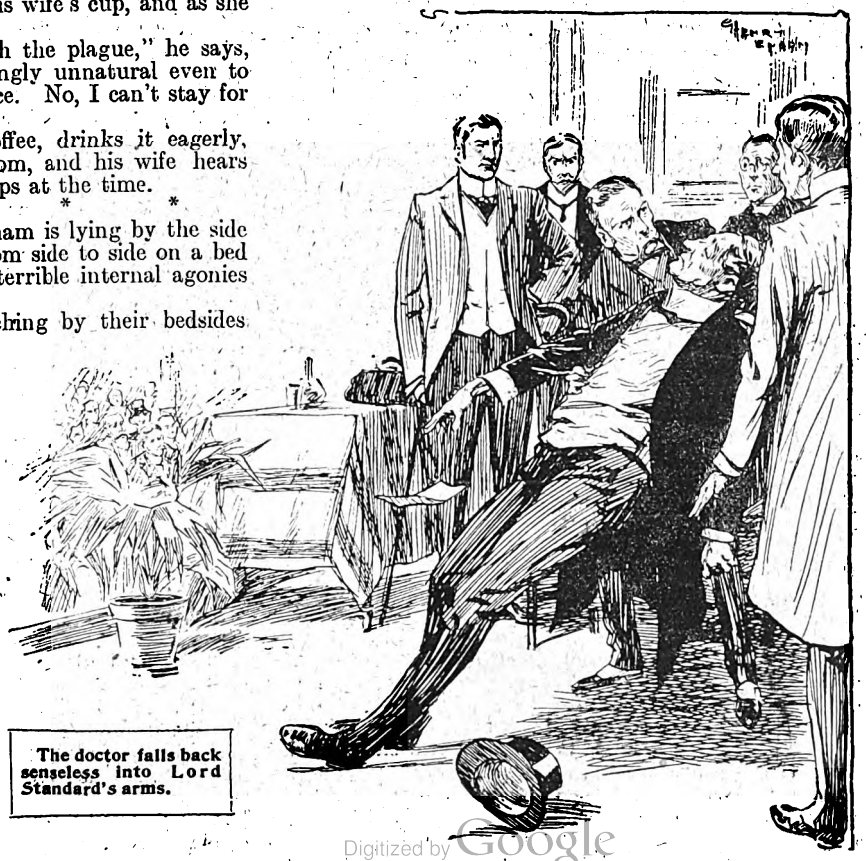
He had been prepared to see her die with his mortal eyes, but the thought of looking back from the other side of the shadow of death and watching his own condemnation is enough to make the boldest man a coward.

Nor is this all. Until this moment when he lies rolling from side to side, in terrible torture, he has never realised the awfulness of pain. In a few minutes more his sweet gentle wife will be on her deathbed, and he cannot send anyone to help her, to even moisten her lips as his are being moistened by the Sister of Mercy.

Horrible visions of hell made terrible with all the instruments of his vivisecting room float before him. Already he feels the hot iron on his brain, the sharp knives running this way and that, the pincers, the chisel and the stunning mallet.

Now his head is being plunged into mercury, now he is being scalded alive, now his limbs are being twisted into cramped and unnatural positions, and he shrieks in his mental agony as he feels himself being carried to a height and dropped upon bars and ridges of iron to test the effect of the wounds he has received. All the miscellaneous torments of his vivisecting room, which he has fancied justifiable, are crushing his happiness now, if happiness is in that tortured man tossing on his deathbed.

Despair is gnawing at his heart. What is the use of



The doctor falls back senseless into Lord Standard's arms.

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all those hours of study now that his life's purpose is wrecked and he can never pursue the grand scientific themes which he had brought almost to perfection?

Presently a sudden calm comes over him. He no longer feels the pains which had been racking him. His last hour has come. The doctor stirs fearfully, and raises himself on his elbow.

He calls to the Sister of Mercy, who has been holding her hands to her ears to shut out the sound of his cries, and asks for a sheet of paper and a pencil. His fingers are trembling so that he can hardly write. His strength is sinking fast, his breath is coming slower. At last it is finished. He signs his name with desperate eagerness, a merciful unconsciousness steals over him, and he falls back on his pillow, one white hand clutching the paper, and the other pressed to his eyes as if to shut out some horrible scene.

* * * * *

It is a cold December afternoon, and a tall, thin man, with hollow cheeks and sunken eyes, sits in one corner of a first-class carriage talking in a low voice to a companion whose eyes are fixed on the wintry landscape.

"Will you be at St. James's Hall to-night, Lovell?" he asks.

"Of course," the other answers. "Every doctor who can spare the time will be there. Besides, as a friend, I expect to share in your triumph. The world has waited since the beginning of time for this discovery."

An expression of pain flits across the invalid's face, and he presses his hand to his heart.

"Told me! What? For the love of Heaven tell me what you mean."

"It is nothing. Only a sudden spasm," he says, as Lovell notices the movement, and bends forward anxiously. "It has often been like that since my illness."

"Ah, that terrible plague. Do you know, Bellingham, I sometimes think your recovery must have been a miracle. No one else has ever recovered from that disease. Perhaps it was that you were reserved to bring your great discovery to perfection. The papers were filled with long accounts of your self-sacrifice, your name was in every mouth, you had already been placed on that pinnacle of fame which you occupy so worthily, when without a word of warning you recovered."

Once more the doctor presses his hand to his side. He is enthralled by the divinest sweetness of gratified ambition. This very night is to herald the epoch he has made in the science of medicine. This consuming delight is the very elixir of life, and he is able to forget all the miseries of the past if it were not for that terrible pain in his side. An illimitable universe is his at last.

He knows now the secret of his recovery from the very jaws of death. He drank his own poison, which was not strong enough to kill a man. It is only by a mistake that he is not the murderer of his wife.

It seems the very irony of Fate that the weapon with which he tried to kill her had been the very means of augmenting her love. He had used the poison to obtain possession of her money, and it had brought it to him, not through her death, but through his death, or what she thought was death. There is little one would not grant a husband who has been restored to life.

At last the storms of Dr. Bellingham's life seemed ended, and in the bright prospects of the future the dismal past is forgotten, thrown off like some terrible nightmare.

The doctor is already in the vanguard in his profession, and he never allows his thoughts to dwell on the crime he so nearly committed. He balances his good work among the poor of Wentfield, and the greatest discovery of all time against the moral murder which has stained his life.

Dr. Bellingham's name has become a by-word in the country. The noble example which he set in going to live among the plague-stricken people of the little hamlet has filled every heart with admiration.

* * * * *

Two hours later and the doctor stands on the platform of St. James' Hall. The vast room is filled with the members of the medical profession, and some of the leading lights are there waiting in breathless anxiety to have the discovery explained.

At this moment the ambition of his life is fulfilled. A smile parts his thin lips as his eyes run over the thousands of white faces upturned waiting to catch the first words which shall fall from his mouth.

He pours out a glass of water and raises it to his lips. A slight commotion behind makes him start, for his nerves are strung to the very highest pitch, and some of the water is spilt down his shirt-front.

A hand is laid on his shoulder, and he hears Lord Standard, who had promised to take the chair, say:

"Dr. Bellingham, you are wanted just for a minute, please."

He goes behind, and the next moment he is arrested for the attempted murder of his wife.

"On what grounds, may I ask, do you insult me in this way?" he says haughtily, to the detective, whose cold, immovable face drives him to desperation.

The man opens a small black bag in his hand, and draws out some crumpled sheets of note-paper.

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"This was found last week in the corner of an old barn at Wentfield," he says. "I believe you wrote it."

The doctor half holds out his hands for his confession, and then falls back senseless into Lord Standard's arms.

* * * * *

Ten years of penal servitude is a worse punishment than death to a man of education and acute refinement.

At times during those long years of imprisonment Dr. Bellingham felt his mind was tottering to its fall.

As a doctor, he knew only too well that brooding and thinking would inevitably drive him to madness unless his thoughts took some definite shape. It is impossible to appreciate the depth of his absorbing despair, which threatened to cloud his intellect for ever. For the second time the cup of his ambition had been dashed from his lips as he essayed to drink. It was only by dwelling on the details of his discovery, and bringing them to greater perfection, that he managed all the time to keep his mind employed.

He was utterly cut off from any glimpse of the outer world, but the thought of his ultimate success made those years in a living tomb more bearable. Hope was strong within him, and buoyed him to the last. A sense of future power made life still worth living, and the rapid development of fresh knowledge made those grim walls less terrible.

* * * * *

At last the dreary years are ended. The doctor, a mere shadow of his former self, is free to climb again the ladder of fame from which he had fallen, and by virtue of his great discovery, to regain his place in the respect of the world.

"Lovell," he says, as he and his friend are in the train travelling homewards, "do you think there is any chance of the world listening to me now?"

All the colour fades out of Lovell's face and leaves him white as death. He looks closely at his friend and then lays one hand on his knee.

"Have you not heard?" he whispers. "Have they not told you?"

"Told me! What? For the love of Heaven tell me what you mean?"

It is some time before Lovell can answer. His heart is beating so fast that he cannot trust himself to speak.

"Can you bear a great shock?" he asks at last, as he makes up his mind it is best to let the doctor know the whole truth at once.

Dr. Bellingham does not answer. His head is thrown back on the cushion of the carriage and his lips are bloodless.

He has just read from his friend's face that his great discovery has been made by another, and has already been given to the world. The new era in medical science had dawned while he had been paying the penalty of his crime in prison.

Another moment and they arrive at their destination. The Doctor lays his hand on Lovell's arm.

"I don't think much of ambition," he says slowly, and with a little catch in his voice. Lovell lets down the window, and turns the handle of the door.

"Ambition. It is nothing to do with ambition," he answers. "It is your methods which have ruined you. First vivisection, and then—but why these gloomy thoughts? See, your wife is waiting on the platform for you. I'll see you again later."

Terence Saxton.

A SWEET ROMANCE.

"This night," exclaimed Don John de Balladoux, "I shall know my fate from the beauteous lips of Eleanor. If—as I would fain believe—she returns my love, and answers me 'Yes,' then it is bliss unutterable, I shall be the happiest man on earth; if the answer is 'No,' then indeed I am undone. But she shall never know what a wound she has given me. I will school my features that they betray me not, and, going from her presence, I will, in some distant land, end a life that will be no longer worth living."

* * * * *

The shades of evening had fallen upon hill and dale. Lady Eleanor sat at the grand piano, gently caressing the keys, which, under the witchery of her touch, seemed to sob forth the accents of love. She was thinking of Don John, whose name was sweeter to her even than the caramel that was even now nestling within her lovely mouth.

Suddenly in the hall she heard the well-known step, and her heart gave a great bound. Then the voice of a menial at the door announced "Don John de Balladoux!"

A look of earnest purpose was in his eyes, and alternate lights and shades of hope and fear flitted over his features, as he advanced and greeted the fair lady. To his greeting she made no reply.

"Why thus silent, Lady Eleanor? Am I not welcome?" he asked, in a voice full of apprehension.

A troubled look in her eyes, and a sorry smile upon her lips was the enigmatical answer.

"I have come," said Don John, growing suddenly bold, "to ask you, Eleanor, to be my wife. I have long loved you; do not tell me I have misread your feelings towards me—you reciprocate my passion, you will be mine?"

Lady Eleanor looked confused, but remained silent.

"What! You answer me nothing? Ah, it is the overwhelming joy of the moment that forbids utterance. Is it not so?" and Don John advanced and grasped her white hand in his.

"Speak to me, dearest. Say something, I cannot endure this suspense!"

Her lips moved and again the troubled look came over her face, but she spoke no syllable. Don John dropped her hand.

"You do not love me or you would at least say one word to tell me so!"

Still she spoke not.

"Enough!" exclaimed he, for his Norman blood was up. "This is meant for silent contempt. I understand. It is enough. I leave you for ever. Farewell!"

So saying he strode from the castle and disappeared in the gloom. Lady Eleanor stood as one paralysed for a brief space, and seemed to be struggling with her emotions. Then with a shriek that rent the night air she flew to the door, and screamed—

"Come back, Don John de Balladoux! I do love you!"

Too late, alas! He had gone for ever. In a distant clime he died without knowing that it was a gummy caramel and not a false heart which held Lady Eleanor silent on that fateful night.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

Chivalry versus Love.

A VERY large proportion of my weekly budget of correspondence comes from those who are stranded 'twixt chivalry and love, and I am asked on all hands to make the awards in such cases. Thus R. D. J. is perplexed as to whether it would be chivalrous in a man to marry a woman who was of late the lady-love of a friend. Now, I think, in this case, chivalry must take second place, on the grounds that the happiness of one is better than the misery of both.

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If a man is deeply in love with a girl who was lately his friend's sweetheart, and his love is returned, it would be cruel to allow even such a thing as good fellowship to interfere with their mutual happiness. The friend must, of course, be very much piqued at seeing his late sweetheart pass into another's hands, and if that other is his own friend, we know the jealousy must be intensified. But I have an idea that the disappointment of jealousy is better than the disappointment of despair, and if you can substitute the one for the other, you are doing an unconscious service.

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Here is a case which occurs to me. An old friend of a male cousin of mine had been disappointed over a girl, but remained on visiting terms with her people. At one of these visits he took my cousin, who fell desperately in love with the girl himself, and she returned the sentiment. Now this would seem very hard indeed on the original lover, but, as a matter of fact, it was the best thing that could happen. For a long time he had been one of the most miserable of men, pining over his disappointment. Directly he saw his friend's success, he became mad with jealousy.

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Instead of moping about he suddenly left the country, scarcely exchanging a word with his friend and rival. Six months after, my cousin met a bronzed and jovial-looking man in the Strand, whom with some difficulty he recognised as this friend. He had, it turned out, gone abroad, and by the distractions of work and travel absolutely forgotten the whole affair, and told my cousin that he had done him the best turn a man could do—*i.e.*, to make him mad with jealousy instead of gloomy with despair.

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Why Not Friendship?

"PERPLEXED MIND" is one of those young ladies who combine a good deal of sense with capriciousness. She is sensible because she thinks she knows in her own mind that she does not, and never could, love a certain young man who persists in writing to her and asking her to meet him. She is capricious because, instead of telling him so, she, so to speak, plays "ping-pong" with her appointments with him, turning up whenever she feels inclined, which is not often. He never feels hurt about it, but goes on writing letters, which grow nicer every time. What can she do?

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Does it very much matter, "Perplexed Mind," whether you feel you could love him or not? If you like him as a friend, and he has not openly made any proposal to you, there is no need for you to be unkind to him by trifling with his feelings. I know a girl who received just such attention from a young man, for whom she boasted that she did not care a straw; but he was nice and agreeable, and also wrote nice letters.

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She often used to meet him, and for a long time looked on him simply as a friend. One day, after a year or more of this, he hinted by a little present that he loved her. She was astonished at the revelation, but made no reply. But as time went on, and the hints grew more pointed, she began to think of him as more than a mere friend and—well, it took a long time maturing, but they are now one of the happiest wedded couples I know. Try doing the same, "Perplexed Mind."

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The Eternal Parent Question.

I AM surrounded by letters from readers putting forward new aspects of the great parent problem. From Spain, SEBASTIAN, a young Spaniard, sends me a pathetic letter beseeching me to help him. He is in love with a girl who returns it, but neither his parents nor hers will allow them to meet, saying they are too young. There appears nothing for them to do but deceive their parents by meeting in secret, by which there is risk of trouble. J. C. (Paddington) is in similar straits, and wants to approach a girl's father, but is fearful, and uncertain how to proceed.

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Let SEBASTIAN and J. C. try, if they can, and get rid of the idea that fathers are a race of tyrants. They have been painted that by innumerable story writers, I know, but I know many fathers, one very intimately, and do not think they are really such black fiends. Fathers, after all, love their daughters, and if, after a lot of example, they see that they really are attached to any man, they must give way.

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If SEBASTIAN is not allowed to meet his love in the moonlight, let him do so at noonday. Let him always walk in the same thoroughfares as she, go to the same places, and let those two parents see that there is no secret made of the glorious fact that they love each other. And let J. C., if he is afraid to face the fearful father, write to him telling him that he loves his daughter, stating what his means are, and if he is in a position now, or in the near future, to give her a good home. If he is, then I say he must be a unique father if he stands in the way. Courage, my good friends, is what you want.

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EDWARD FARRELL CHEMIST

By Philip Moon.

V.—THE RARE MINERAL.

THE task seemed simple, and Edward Farrell failed to understand the difficulty that the Mint authorities had experienced.

He was examining a coin that was one of a number he had received from the Mint.

They were counterfeit, but so cleverly and skilfully had they been produced that it was a matter of extreme difficulty to distinguish them from the genuine coins of the realm.

There was some strange property about the alloy used by the counterfeiters that gave the coins—although undoubtedly of base metal—all the characteristics usually associated with "the king of metals" itself.

This fact, together with the skilfulness of the imitated design, had enabled the producers to pass with impunity an enormous quantity of the counterfeit coins upon an unwitting public.

The operations of the gang had become so extensive that the Mint authorities were really seriously alarmed. Do what they would the Scotland Yard people appeared absolutely unable to get upon the coiners' track.

The banks all over the country suffered largely and complained bitterly. First in London, then in Liverpool, and yet again in Newcastle, the spurious coinage appeared, and in no case could the anxious detectives find any trace of the criminals.

The coins upon examination at the Mint proved a fruitful source of mystery.

Apparently they were nothing but a carefully proportioned alloy of copper, lead, and tin—yet strangely enough none of the analyses would balance as they should do.

Neither could a similar alloy be formed from the estimated proportions of the several metals. No explanation of the mystery was forthcoming, and at the instigation of Inspector Roberts, of Scotland Yard, Edward Farrell was consulted.

As he stood in his laboratory and looked at the piece of metal in his hand, he wondered whence all the difficulty could arise.

The examination of an alloy should be one of the simplest operations in quantitative chemical analysis—yet all the experts at the Mint had acknowledged themselves baffled.

It was strange, certainly—and was eminently a task to Farrell's liking, though he half feared that the difficulty would survive even a casual examination.

He settled down to work upon the coin, however, and began, by the wonderful agents and schemes of present day chemistry to resolve his alloy into its simple elements.

The hours passed. Groups and sub-groups—black precipitates and white ones—vile smells and biting acids, followed each other in orthodox succession, and at last Farrell's labour was about to yield up its secret.

When the last washing was done, the last weight recorded, and the last calculation made, Farrell quickly totalled up his results.

Strange! His results no more balanced than did those of the Mint. He knew that most carefully had he separated and weighed each element, yet here was an unaccountable difference.

Whence could it arise?

He paced slowly up and down the room, then sank into his chair—lost in thought.

For at least half an hour he scarcely moved; then, all at once, as a sudden thought struck him, he sprang up, and hastily picked a volume from the book-shelf.

"That's the secret of it all—I'll wager," cried he. "We must remember that science may lend its aid even to counterfeiting nowadays."

He eagerly hunted up some information in the book he had selected, and then turned to his alloy once more.

Again the hours passed, with their succession of precipitates, smells and acids, but an observant spectator would have noticed that this time one more weight was recorded—one estimation more was made than in the previous examination.

In short—another element had been separated.

Again Farrell totalled his results, and this time they balanced exactly.

"Just as I thought," said he, with a gleam of satisfaction, "but it's pretty smart, whoever they are, and, by Jove!" continued he with a start, as an idea flashed upon him. "Their smartness may lead to their detection.

"Yes," concluded he, after a thoughtful pause, "it's worth trying."

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His examination had taken him until well in the night, and in the morning he called on Inspector Roberts, of Scotland Yard.

"I have examined the coin you sent me from the Mint," Farrell began after the usual greetings, "and it has yielded a somewhat remarkable result. In fact, the very source of the difficulty experienced by those at the Mint, appears, to me likely to lead to the detection of the coiners."

"Indeed!" said the inspector, with surprise, he had expected Farrell would overcome the difficulty that the others had experienced, but that he should be able to trace the coiners themselves seemed never to have entered his mind. "Indeed! And may I ask ——?"

"No!" interrupted Farrell, with a quiet laugh, "You may not just now. I will see what my inquiries of to-day result in before I offer any explanations. What I really called for was to ask if you will send me some men, if I get on the track of the coiners and find I need help. I will wire, or contrive in some way to let you know particulars."

"Certainly!" replied the half incredulous and still curious inspector. "As many as you like, and let's hope you need them—although it seems too good to be possible—this gang has eluded our sharpest men."

"Well, well! we'll see," said Farrell, still with his quiet, confident smile. "In the meantime I should be obliged if you will let me see a directory."

The inspector brought the directory, and Farrell pored for a few minutes over its pages. He wrote down two or three addresses in his pocket-book and then, bidding the inspector adieu, departed.

Inspector Roberts was a smart man in his way, and he noticed that Farrell looked at that portion of the directory that gave the names of the different mineralogists in London. This, however, only added to his wonder, instead of satisfying his curiosity.

Edward Farrell, as soon as he left Scotland Yard, hailed a cab, and gave the driver an address near Holborn.

This proved to be a small, unpretentious-looking shop which bore the legend of "Anthony Carr, dealer in rare minerals" on its facia board.

As Farrell entered, the proprietor rose from a small table, at which he was engaged in sorting specimens, and came forward.

"I want to know," said Farrell, "if you can supply me with a quantity of the rare mineral called ariumite?"

"Ariumit! I am afraid not," replied Carr, with something of surprise in his tone, and then, as a half apology, he continued, "It is strange what a demand there has been for the last few months for a rare mineral that was scarcely ever heard of before."

"A demand for ariumite?" asked Farrell, in apparent astonishment. "Whoever would want that in any quantity? It isn't used for anything is it?"

"I don't know about that," said Carr, "but Greyson and Co., of Aldgate, have bought up all my supply for the last month or so for a customer of theirs, and are constantly worrying me for more. You see the total available supply is very small at present. It is only found in one or two isolated places in Norway, and only then in small quantities. Perhaps," continued he, "if you could see Greyson, you might get him to arrange with his customer to let you have some of his supply. He is sending a small lot to-morrow, I know, for I have promised him all I have to hand by that time to make it up, so this would be a favourable opportunity."

Farrell had listened to Anthony Carr with scarcely suppressed excitement.

"Thank you for your information," he said, "I will certainly call on Greyson and see what I can arrange with him."

Farrell bade Anthony Carr adieu and went direct from Holborn to the more pretentious premises of Greyson and Co., of Aldgate.

Farrell noticed with a smile of satisfaction that this firm was one whose address he had also extracted from the directory.

He found Greyson to be a genial business man of about forty, and to him he explained what he wanted, and how he had been

"I want to know," said Farrell, "if you can supply me with a quantity of the mineral called ariumite."

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recommended to him by Anthony Carr. Greyson listened in silence.

"I am afraid it is hopeless," he said, when Farrell had finished. "My customers are so extremely anxious to get all the ariumite they can, that I am certain they will never consent to part with any."

"Do you know for what they are using it?" Farrell asked.

"No!" said Greyson, "they are very secret and mysterious about it—some trade process I should imagine—but as they pay me well, I am not at all anxious to find out. I only know they are a small firm of brass founders or something of that sort, and have small works at Stratford."

"You are sending a small lot to them to-morrow, I believe?" said Farrell.

"Yes; about a hundredweight. It represents the total quantity in England at the present time," added Greyson, "so rare is it."

"How do you propose sending it?" Farrell asked.

"By van."

"Well, I want to ask you a great favour. I have reason to suspect that foul play is being carried on by this quiet little firm of brass founders, and I want you to let me take the place of your carter to-morrow, so that I may carry the box of ariumite to them myself. I am investigating the case on behalf of Scotland Yard," added Farrell, suggestively.

That decided it. Greyson had at first seemed to look upon Farrell's request with suspicion, but the mention of Scotland Yard quickly put a different complexion on the matter, and he agreed for him to go readily enough.

"I suppose if anything really is wrong, it will stop my sale of ariumite," Greyson said rather ruefully, "I was getting such a good price for it too. Well, I suppose it can't be helped."

"What time shall I be here to-morrow?" asked Farrell, without appearing to notice Greyson's regrets.

"Well, if you are ready by five o'clock in the afternoon that will be plenty soon enough," said Greyson, "for they want the ariumite delivered about seven, and that will allow you ample time. They always arrange for the mineral to be delivered rather late."

"All right!" said Farrell. "I will be here by five. Thank you for your information. Of course you will keep this conversation quite secret, and now—till to-morrow—good-bye!"

* * * * *

Punctually at five o'clock Farrell presented himself at Greyson's warehouse, arrayed in the humble garb of an ordinary London carman.

After he had received his instructions and seen the box of precious mineral safely stowed on his van, he mounted the box, and started on his mission.

The experience was a novel one, and more than once he called forth the good-natured banter of his passing brother vansmen by his awkwardness.

He did not take long, however, to grow more used to his position, and eventually, after a few inquiries, he reached the works of "John Smith and Co., brass-founders," as they called themselves on the entrance-gate. The works were small, and stood upon the edge of the bleak Stratford Marshes, near to the main line of the Great Eastern Railway. They were approached by a narrow, winding, and very muddy lane, at the extreme end of which they stood. As the pseudo carman drove slowly along, his keen eyes took in most carefully all the details, although an onlooker would have thought him too intent on guiding his horse to have eyes for anything else.

It was just beginning to grow dusk as he rang the yard bell at the closed gates, and no one came for some time in answer to his summons. Presently, however, after another ring, and a further pause, a little wicket was shot back, and a sullen-looking man asked impatiently what Farrell wanted.

"Got a box for yer, guvnor—from Greyson's," Farrell replied, in a gruff and typical carman's voice.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said the man behind the wicket, in a smoother tone. "All right, drive in here and plank it down," and he opened the gates for the van. Farrell drove his van in and started to walk the horse down the short road towards the building at the other end of the

Before the astonished inmates knew where they were, they found a revolver at each of their heads.

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yard. He was soon stopped by a man at the gate, however, who shouted out suspiciously—

"Here! Hold on there, mate—I want the box at this end of the yard—not that."

So Farrell obediently stopped his horse, and helped the man off with the box.

"Rather precious sort of stuff, ain't it, guvnor?" he hazarded. "They take a sight o' care on it up at our place."

The man again looked suspiciously at Farrell, but replied tentatively, "Yes, it is rather, I suppose."

"Where do yer want it taken to? Can I give yer a lift?" asked Farrell, "it's pretty weighty fer one."

"No, you can't," snapped out the other, losing his patience, "I've got a couple more to help me, so you can just back your horse out and get home to your tea. Here's the price of a pint for you."

"Thank yer, guvnor. Good-night," said Farrell, with gruff cheeriness, and he departed with his horse and van.

Although he had been fully occupied with his van and the box, he had, nevertheless, made a most careful scrutiny of the yard and its surroundings. Whatever he had gathered from his hasty survey seemed to have impressed him considerably.

When he reached the High Street, at Stratford, he found a quiet stable-yard at which he left his horse and van, and went to a telegraph office and dispatched a telegram to Scotland Yard.

"Send six men by 8.10 train Liverpool Street to Stratford—armed.—Farrell."

His next visit was to the district Police Station, and from there he went to the nearest restaurant and enjoyed a hearty tea.

After tea he went to the station to meet the men he had telegraphed for. When they arrived he found that Inspector Roberts had himself accompanied them. He was not so incredulous now, but was most hopelessly mystified, and wanted to see for himself Farrell's *coup*. Farrell rapidly explained what he wanted them to do, and led the way through the streets towards the marshes.

He had noticed that the premises of John Smith and Co. could be approached from the marshes on one side without the chance of being seen or heard by anyone within, and it was towards that side that Farrell was leading. It was dark and bewildering on that dreary old marsh, but Farrell never faltered or strayed. He brought them up to the works wall with unerring precision. He gave them all most careful instructions, posted one man on each side of the works with orders to shoot down anyone attempting to escape, and then with the rest noiselessly scaled the low wall, and crept down the yard towards the building at the end.

Evidently someone was at work in the building, for lines of light could be seen through the cracks and crannies of the shutters—while from the chimneys a series of bright sparks were ascending as from a foundry fire.

At a signal the man stationed on the gate side of the works rang the yard bell loudly, according to special instructions Farrell had given him.

As its clanging note rang out, a hurried scuffling of feet could be heard within, whilst a voice Farrell recognised as belonging to his friend of earlier in the evening, could be heard exclaiming:

"Who on earth's that, I wonder? Cover the dibs up and I'll go down and see. It's someone come to the wrong show I should think."

Then two other voices were heard, and after that the sound of bolts being withdrawn.

As the door slowly opened, Farrell and the others burst in, and before the astonished inmates knew where they were, they found a revolver at each of their heads, and Edward Farrell, in his carter's disguise, surveying them exultantly.

The men were completely trapped and had no chance of resistance. Farrell's carefully arranged plan had worked without a hitch.

Farrell gave a shrill whistle which brought up all his men from their posts, and about a dozen policemen who had been hiding a little lower down the lane, in accordance with Farrell's arrangements at the District Police Station.

Into their hands Farrell resigned the bitterly reviling prisoners.

A search revealed a large number of counterfeit gold coins in all stages of their production, together with dies, metal, and a complete counterfeiting plant, while the ariumite that Farrell had delivered in the afternoon had already been partly used.

It was indeed a splendid capture—one man proved to be a chemist of some considerable skill, another a clever mechanician, and the third a man whose name had been heard more than once in financial circles—the three forming a formidable and most unscrupulous combination.

Inspector Roberts was elated, but still mystified—and at last, on the way home, he said—

"I see you have really captured these fellows, but I can't for the life of me see what connection there is between your laboratory and these out-of-the-way works."

Farrell smiled softly. "I will explain," said he.

"When I first analysed the alloy I had the same difficulty as our friends of the mint; the results would not balance.

"This could only come from the presence of some element that I had not separated by my method of analysis—a rare metal of some sort.

"This upon examination I found to be the case.

"The alloy from which the coins are produced contains a small but appreciable percentage of arium, and it is to the presence of this trace of arium that the extraordinary characteristics of the alloy are due.

"Now it is a well-known fact that the total available amount of ariumite—the rare mineral from which the metal is obtained—is very small, and it was very certain that the coiners, whoever they were, would have to ransack the market to obtain enough of this rare element that was so essential to their success.

"If, therefore, I could in any way find out who had lately been purchasing ariumite in any quantity, I opined that I should probably be very easily able to identify them with your troublesome coiners.

"My first visit after leaving you yesterday was to Anthony Carr, a mineralogist of Holborn, and I there found that someone *had* been buying ariumite, but through the medium of another firm, Greyson and Co., of Aldgate.

"Under the pretence of wishing to buy some ariumite I next visited them, and from them found that their customers were a rather mysterious firm of brass-founders at Stratford.

"They were sending a parcel of ariumite to-day, so I revealed my identity, and arranged with Greyson to let me take the mineral to them myself in the guise of a carter.

"I saw enough when I reached the works this afternoon to confirm my suspicions, and then—well, the rest you know."

[Next Week: THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR.]

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NAME HUNTING COMPETITION: RAILWAY STATIONS.

1st Prize: £25.
2nd Prize: £10.
3rd Prize: £5.

Special Prize for Ladies. *A six-guinea costume, which the winner may have made anywhere and send the bill to us.*

In the event of ladies winning the first cash prize, the Special Prize will go to the lady next most nearly correct. Should gentlemen win the first cash prize, the Special Prize will go to the lady most nearly correct. In the event of a tie it will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

On the next column will be found thirty sets of words, each set describing the name of a railway station in the United Kingdom, the name of which will be found in Bradshaw's Railway Guide.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* dated March 20th, in which another coupon appears.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

The prizes are all offered by *Pearson's Weekly*.

Cut to edge—>

Example:

Opposite north; protects ..... South Shields.

1. An indefinite article ..... 1 .....
2. Buildings for storing grain ..... 2 .....
3. Of greater size ..... 3 .....
4. Desecrate ..... 4 .....
5. Circular tree ..... 5 .....
6. Only paved road ..... 6 .....
7. Opposite east valley ..... 7 .....
8. Cling to ..... 8 .....
9. Harden by heat sufficiently ..... 9 .....
10. Third month ..... 10 .....
11. Small part devoured ..... 11 .....
12. Courageous ..... 12 .....
13. Richard's on stream ..... 13 .....
14. D above harbour ..... 14 .....
15. Huntsman's horn ..... 15 .....
16. To take exercise ..... 16 .....
17. A young salmon ..... 17 .....
18. A large tooth; a ditch ..... 18 .....
19. A cyclist ..... 19 .....
20. A ferry boat; to befall ..... 20 .....
21. Proclamation; inter ..... 21 .....
22. A manor ..... 22 .....
23. Finest timber ..... 23 .....
24. Horsefly; paved road ..... 24 .....
25. Part of the ear ..... 25 .....
26. A small spade ..... 26 .....
27. Resin from fir trees ..... 27 .....
28. Plastic earth; angry ..... 28 .....
29. To be careful ..... 29 .....
30. Support ..... 30 .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Cut to edge—>

Get *Pearson's Weekly*, dated March 20th. On sale next Friday Another coupon appears in it.

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A Lovers' Quarrel.

He thrust his hands into his pockets. She envied him his ability to do so, but compromised by twisting her fingers tightly together behind her back.

From her standpoint she felt that things never could be the same again. It wasn't that she blamed him for caring because she had seen too much of Tom Wells. She had rather enjoyed his jealousy at first.

She liked to see him standing by, clenching his hands and growing pale, because she knew that it was all because of love for her. But when the battle was finally on, when he had got her alone and come to the point, things changed. Instead of having him at her mercy, he, in some way, seemed to have her at his.

"There now, little girl, it's all over, and we might as well kiss and make up. I know you were thoughtless. You didn't mean to hurt me by your flirting with that little, insignificant schoolboy, so we'll forget all about it. Come, lift up your head, Trix, and——"

Trix did lift up her head, but Ewing stepped back, all at once realising that the lips weren't quite so coaxingly sweet as usual. Her chin seemed to have lost its dimple; her eyes might have been hard if there had not lurked in them a trace of hurt pleading. But her voice was very calm and even as she answered slowly:

"You seem to forget that I may have something to say about whether or not you will kiss me; also you don't seem to remember that you yourself left college only last June, just a year ahead of this other little insignificant schoolboy.

"I am almost afraid," she went on, taking on a superior tone of condescension, as though the new feminine ideas were really rooted in her dear little soul—"I'm almost afraid that men who have broad shoulders and have won questionable fame in a brutal football team when at college, somehow grow to let their physical power dominate their motives as well.

"Mr. Philip Ewing, you can't carry me before you just because your arms are strong. A woman admires fine proportions in a man, but not after he betrays that his muscle and brawn are mightier factors in his life than gentle manliness. To think about it, I don't know but I prefer Mr. Tom Wells' lack of stature, with its attendant abundance of honour and honesty, to Mr. Philip Ewing's six feet of pompous stubbornness."

She was frightened at herself, for she hadn't meant to say so much, but when she had begun she could not find a place to stop. Then, too, she rather enjoyed seeing him wince, and when he drew in his breath with a quick start of pain at her fling at his "questionable fame," she was goaded on by an irresistible power to show him, once for all, that she wasn't going to be wax in his hands.

She was too angry to consider. Pride had overpowered her love, and as she went on the big fellow only looked at the tiny fury in speechless amazement, crushed, hurt, astounded at her sarcastic deluge.

At last she finshed. He bowed his head as if to go and then turned, holding out the dear, strong arms, where she would have given worlds to creep if only she could have done so without a sacrifice to her pride, and all he said was:

"Beatrice, for Heaven's sake, don't make this mistake. Remember, dear, that you once loved me; that I was the first man you loved; that you were the first girl I loved. You can't go to someone else. I won't let another man have you and kiss you and tell you things I have told you."

But this tiny embodiment of the new woman's determination to teach man his place set her teeth and only smiled at him—smiled just as amusedly as he had smiled at her in the beginning of the little dispute which now had reached such alarming proportions.

Poor Philip stood and waited, holding out his empty arms, and she merely smiled. So he turned and went, but the new woman received a terrible shock the instant the door closed behind him, for Miss Beatrice threw herself on a mountain of cushions and indulged in a deluge of good salt tears.

There was that tea that very afternoon where she was going to pour. It would never do in the world not to go, for the girls must never dream that she cared, but she choked again as she remembered that he had promised to drop in near the end with a few of the men. And she knew what that meant, for had he not "dropped" in every afternoon during the season, ostensibly to have her hand him a cup of tea?

And hadn't he learnt to bring enough of the other fellows with him to keep the rest of the girls busy, so that he and tiny Bee could have their little talk all alone? In fact, it was at the end of the big, bewildering reception at which her mother had introduced her at the beginning of the winter that he had first dared to tell her his love—there, when the few last guests were lingering in the hall and she had crept back to one of the farther tables, a little, flushed, weary maid in a quaint, snowy gown, a bud already beginning to tire of the fierce light beating on her dear, dazed head.

She never afterwards could remember just how it came about, but it began when his sleeve caught on some of the shining bits of silver among the ferns before her, and—and—well, she was crying softly on his shoulder in less than a moment, both of them so oblivious of everything else that they didn't wake till mamma stood before them with a startled cry.

Then they had to tell mamma, even before they had really told each other very much, but papa liked Phil's father, so it had come out all right in the end.

They had told everybody by this time, and the society columns had printed the date of their wedding, with a list of the bridesmaids, and she had ordered the beloved gown, with its frightfully long train and its stern air of severe matronly elegance.

And now there wouldn't be any wedding at all, and the girls would give back the pretty pearl hearts she had presented to them as her attendants, and mamma would be so ashamed of her that she would probably be sent abroad for a year or two.

That wouldn't amount to much, however, as it would take her away from Philip, and of course she must learn as soon as possible to bear the parting. Did it take long to mend a heart? she questioned, in the midst of the big, wet pillow.

Why was it women ever were made to care so much for men if men were so cruel? Of course it was all Philip's fault.

He had certainly never been in earnest with her, she supposed, and took this way to show it when he grew tired of her. Well, she would show him that women can be hard, too, and she was going to begin by breaking every masculine heart at that tea that afternoon.

"For," mused this desperate little girl, as she arrayed herself with feverish skill in the lovely new gown sent home that very morning, "I used to be glad I am pretty because Philip—no, Mr. Ewing—liked it. Now I am glad because I know it will make me all the more capable of hurting him just as he has hurt me."

Everybody marvelled at Miss Lane's vivacity, and Tom Wells fairly tingled with joy at the look she gave him when she dropped the tiny sweet cubes from her tongs into his fragile cup. But when the other guests were gone to the cloak-room and the men were waiting to escort their fluffily-clad charges to the carriages, Beatrice sat alone and forgotten.

Philip was late, and he strode past the men into the drawing-room and soon had found the table at which Beatrice was sitting.

And at the moment when she looked up to see him standing before her, with his fine head bowed, and such a cruel, white line about his lips, all she could do was to hold out her hands.

Philip took them.

"It was all my fault," she breathed.

"No; it was all mine," he whispered. Then he went on, looking into her eyes with his face strangely sad and determined:

"It has been a terrible lesson, my love, and one we must never try again. Perhaps this may not have done much harm, except"—and his voice grew husky—"there will always be that little rift in the lute. I had hoped we should never have had that to regret, but it came, and we must use it as a warning. Hasn't it been terrible enough, Beatrice, to keep us from it for ever? "Don't say it hasn't!"

Their hostess found them both so worn and yet so happy that she understood without a word.

"Come with me," was all she said, and, taking them each by the hand she led them back to a dear little room, all palms and blossoms and soft, rosy lights, and there she left them, saying, as she stole away:

"Beatrice hasn't been well or happy this afternoon, and she is all worn out now. Do you know, Mr. Ewing, that, when I am tired and heartsick, there isn't anything in the world which rests me and makes me glad so much as my husband's kiss?"

ARTHUR ANSTELL.

She was a Victim.

"You astonish me, madam! I never should have suspected you of being a smoker of cigarettes." "I never touch them, doctor." "Why, I understood you a moment ago to say you were a victim of the cigarette craze." "I am, my husband smokes them."

Auntie had been Nursed.

AUNTIE: "You must run in, Dolly; it is bedtime." Dolly: "But why don't you go to bed, too, if it's quite time?" Auntie: "I am not a child, my dear. It is different." Dolly: "Yes, you is a child—I've seen Mr Jones nursing you."

The Husband Scored.

HUSBAND: "I am not ready to go out yet." Wife: "But I am, and we must go immediately." Husband: "But, my dear, your hat is not on straight." Wife: "Dear me! Isn't it? Wait a minute till I go to my room and put it right." Exit wife for half-an-hour, and shrewd husband completes his work.

Her First Chance.

AN extremely bashful and submissive young lady, who was being forced into a marriage against her inclination, because her guardian expected to make a good thing out of the transaction, presented herself at the hymeneal altar. "Wilt thou take this man to be thy wedded husband?" inquired the clergyman. "My good sir," replied the young woman, "you are the first person who has consulted me about this marriage."

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THE Associated Bank Affair.

Being an account of the luck attending another enterprise of the "Montague and Fitchett Syndicate"; and of the part Lester Wylde — alias Philip Lester — alias Cyrus Hoffman — played in the business.

CHAPTER I.

A Conversation and its Consequences.

"EDIE!"

"Ye—s!" in a girl's shrill treble, through the half open door of the dressing-room.

"Come here, quick, if you're dressed! I've something to tell you!"

The first speaker, a tall spare, sallow-faced, but keen-eyed man of two or three-and-thirty, was conning with much apparent interest, the front advertisement sheet of the *Times*, at the waiting breakfast-table in the sitting-room of a private suite at the Hotel Salisbury.

"Well, what is it, Phil?"

She was certainly very sweet and winning, this piquante, *petite* Mrs. Cyrus Hoffman, of San Francisco.

Her husband evidently thought so, for he laid down his paper, looked up at her, and smiled his satisfaction.

"Well!" she repeated, with just a little frown of impatient curiosity, "Anything good?"

"Very good; if my suspicions are correct—and I think they are. Listen!" And he took up the *Times* again.

"The Associated Banking Co., Limited, 1001, Strand, W.C. Assets, £2,000,000. Fifteen per cent. allowed on deposits of £5 and upwards, on three months' notice of withdrawal. Twenty per cent. on twelve months' ditto. Interest paid quarterly. Loans from £25 and upwards negotiated on favourable terms. A few founder's shares—paying seventeen per cent.—on hand for disposal. All communications and applications to F. M. MORTIMER, Secretary."

"Well, Phil, I don't quite see!"

"Don't you? I made sure you would. Usually you can see very nearly as far as I can myself; which is a great compliment, my dear!"

"Explain, please."

"Have you forgotten Persia, yet?"

"Persia! What has Persia got to do with a London Bank?"

"Much; if you look at things in the right light. See here, Edie! Who were the dear 'had ones' in our little Persian transaction?"

"Why—why—the Montague man, and—and—"

"Yes?"

"Fitchett!—Mortimer Fitchett—Oh! I think I know now, Phil! You've got an idea that the syndicate is at work again, and that—that—"

"Secretary Mortimer is our old friend Mortimer Fitchett. Quite right! I've more than an idea, I'm sure of it; and as I know that both that gentleman and his partner love me much on the old account, I have a fancy to beat them again at their own game."

"But how, Phil—how?"

"Well, it is impossible to settle on any definite plan yet. One thing is certain, neither of them must know we are in London. As a matter of fact, we shall only remain here for, say, four days, and be in Paris on Sunday. However, I don't suppose (unless they see me, which I will take care they do not) that they imagine I am within a couple of thousand miles of the British Metropolis."

"Is there anything that I can do?"

"Yes; come with me directly after breakfast in the brougham to Coutts' Bank. When I have cashed one of my circular letters on them, I will give you a hundred pounds. This you will take with you (making use of the brougham) to this—this same Associated Bank; open an account in your own name—as a widow—ask to see the secretary, and ply your prettiest wiles to pump him for all he's worth."

"I see."

"That's all right! Now, look smart over breakfast, there's a dear girl; for my fingers are itching to put a spoke in Messrs. Montague and Fitchett's wheel. This time I don't seek to make anything; I just want to see if, like wise men, they have profited by the advice that I gave them in my letter of August last year. That's all!"

"Splendid, Phil! Don't you feel quite virtuous at the bare idea of rendering so great a service to society as the unmasking of these two rogues?"

"Why, yes! It's rather a different matter, this, to our Persian experiment, isn't it? Cyrus Hoffman has other interests than had Lest——"

"S—h! Phil! Walls have ears, and doors key-holes."

"So they have. But I suppose I am getting reckless with prosperity."

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"What name am I to use when making this deposit with—our late friends?"

"The one you stopped me from uttering just now; Lester—Mrs. Cyrus Lester, of—well, of the Hotel Salisbury. That address will do as well as any other."

Breakfast over, Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Hoffman carried out their programme to the letter.

Coutts' first; there they parted company. The gentleman, after handing twenty five-pound notes to his wife, seeing her off eastwards, in the carriage, while he, hailing a hansom, drove back to the hotel.

Except a few Americans, the hotel was very empty. One or two county people, up for shopping, or kindred business, being almost the sum of the native contingent.

Hoffman, ever observant, had noticed among the the latter a couple, middle-aged and agriculturally aristocratic, who somehow peculiarly attracted him.

"Sir Arthur Stanesby, Bart., of Stanesby Moat, Lincolnshire, and lady," appeared on the hotel register, and it was not long before, over a cigar, and a bottle of "dry," the former, and Cyrus Hoffman became—conversationally, at least—friendly.

"It is time Edie was back," said Hoffman to himself, as he sat opposite to Sir Arthur in the big bay window of the smoking-room, overlooking the street.

Then, for a brief while, the talk between the two men turned upon stocks and shares and money affairs generally.

"Now," said Sir Arthur emphatically, "you would never guess what it is that has brought me up to town at this dead-and-alive time of the year!"

"No," replied the other, politely acquiescent. "It isn't at all likely; seeing that your private matters are, naturally, a sealed book so far, that is, as I am concerned."

"Just so. But you have made it clear to me, Mr. Hoffman, that you are something of an expert on the subject of money investment; and I am tempted, therefore, to violate good breeding, by asking, on so short an acquaintance, your advice with regard to a contemplated purchase of certain shares in a new financial undertaking, said purchase involving also the deposit at good interest of the remainder of my fortune."

"A new undertaking, Sir Arthur! May I ask particulars?"

"Certainly. Some time ago I had staying with me at Stanesby Moat a friend of my son's, a company director—Captain Montague."

"Captain Montague! That's curious!"—reflectively.

"Do you know him?"

"Well—er—slightly; haven't seen him for some time, though. But go on, please. I am more than interested."

"Ah! Glad I thought to consult you about it. Well, among other things relating to City matters, Captain Montague happened to mention on one occasion that one of the three companies with which he was directorally connected, was the Associated Banking Co., which he assured me was the best investment in the market."

"And you——?"

"I am up in London now to sell out my railway-stock; purchase Associated Bank shares, and to transfer my current and deposit accounts to the latter."

"Sir Arthur, you have asked my advice, and you must not take offence at the bluntness of it. Is this Captain Montague in town?"

INFLUENZA

or

BOVRIL?

Which will you have?

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"Oh, yes, he is coming here this afternoon to fetch me, and to himself introduce me to the other directors, and to the secretary of the bank."

"And is the sum large that you propose to invest in this manner?"

"A trifle over twenty thousand pounds."

"Now, Sir Arthur! a few hours ago you did not know that I even existed, and you only have my bare word that I am that which I say I am. Assuming, however, that I am sincere, and that my advice is good, will you consent to conduct this transaction with the Associated Bank just according as I shall direct, always supposing that my one object is to do you a good turn."

The baronet for a moment seemed to be taken aback, but soon came to the conclusion that his new friend knew what he was talking about, and really desired to render him a service.

"Well, Mr. Hoffman, it may, of course, appear strange that I should agree to put myself and my affairs in your hands, but I am so confident that you know something that will materially benefit me, that not to do so would be suicidal as towards myself, and an undoubted and direct insult to you."

"Thanks! In the first place, then, receive Captain Montague as you have arranged, and lead him to imagine that you are unable this afternoon to complete the business, but that to-morrow at noon, you will attend at the bank to 'hand over' and to 'receive.'"

"But this almost implies distrust of the captain, and of his company!"

"Let that question rest for the present. After Captain Montague has gone I will let you know how to proceed to-morrow."

At this moment a servant summoned Hoffman away. He hurried to their private sitting-room to find his wife impatiently awaiting him.

"Well?" he queried, excitedly.

"As you thought! I have seen Fitchett, who has so far over-reached himself as to boast to me of a rich new client whom one of the directors hopes to introduce to-day, and who is expected to invest a large fortune in the bank stock, and so on."

"Bravo, Edie! You're a daisy, my girl! We've got them again, as sure as their names are not what they profess to be. Wait a bit, I'm just going downstairs for a minute!"

Two seconds later he joined the baronet again.

"Sir Arthur," he said. "It's the best day's work you ever did when you asked my advice. I apologised to you a while since for being a little free with it, but I've learnt something during the last five minutes, and I say now, that if you want to serve yourself, and at the same time do your duty, as a magistrate and as a good citizen, you *must* be guided by me."

"Well, but what is it—what is wrong?"

"Only this, Sir Arthur! Captain Montague, his colleagues in the bank, the very bank itself, are a fraud, a delusion, and a snare! I know this, never mind how, but I know this, and the men who are responsible for the swindle know that I know, if there is any virtue in thought transference as between criminal and detective."

CHAPTER II.

The Skeleton in the Bank Cupboard.

Mr. F. M. Mortimer (as prospectus) secretary, manager, and chairman of the board of directors of the Associated Banking Co., Ltd., was ill at ease.

Always of a hungrily-lean personality, he seemed to be more attenuated than ever, while suspicion and apprehension unmistakable gleamed in his ferret-like little eyes.

"What in the name of goodness does this mean? Monty meeting with a put-off! There's something I don't understand! I wish he'd turn up. There wasn't time last night to tell me much, and for aught I know, somebody may call before I've got the strength of things."

It was the morning after Cyrus Hoffman's talk with Sir Arthur Stanesby, and Mortimer (or Fitchett, rather, to give him his right name) sat alone, a victim to unpleasant suspense, by the fire in the board-room.

Shortly after ten o'clock Montague appeared, in much the same frame of mind as his partner.

"Now then!" snarled Fitchett, "just tell me exactly how things stand. I shouldn't be a little surprised if you haven't trumped my card and lost us the odd trick. If you have I'll—well—I'll spoil you for ever doing it again."

"Then why didn't you do the negotiating yourself! Who first got the man and induced him to come up to London, prepared to put his money on our horse?"

"That's nothing to brag about!" replied the other savagely, "if you stop at that and say or do something so rankly idiotic that all you've done goes for nothing, or perhaps worse."

"Now look here," said Montague, his voice ringing mischief, "who made you my 'boss,' and schoolmaster-in-chief? If you'd been in my place you'd have done as I did, and have come out much about the same. I couldn't help the change in the old boy's arrangements, all I *could* do was to make the best of it, and do my 'level' to keep the game going to a finish."

Fitchett did not answer directly, but sat looking into the fire, and gnawing his finger-nails in nervously meditative fashion.

"Get a Bradshaw!" he snapped out at last, springing up himself, and going over to a big, pretentious-looking safe let into the wall, which he opened with a small key attached to his watch-guard.

"Look slippy, I tell you!" he repeated, and emphasising the remark with an oath, seeing that the other still sat on in sulky disinclination to move.

"Do you want to save your skin, you fool? Can't you see that *someone* not *something* has come between us and Stanesby? Quick, turn up in Bradshaw all information *re* getting to Paris before to-morrow morning—before midnight to-night, if possible!"

While speaking, he was tumbling out the contents of the safe on to the floor; bonds, scrip, notes, little bags of gold, soon lay in a mixed heap, at which Fitchett dashed, cramming his pockets and two small Gladstones, and consigning hands full of papers of all sorts to the flames.

The safe was one of those usual to banks, being in the nature of a large iron cupboard, shelved on its three sides, and with its bottom level with the floor of the room.

Before opening it Fitchett had closed and locked the door communicating with the outer, or public office, where a staff of two cashiers and four clerks was employed in the usual routine of a banking establishment.

"Well!" demanded Fitchett presently, when nothing remained of the safe's contents except a fair-sized heap of ashes on the tiled hearth, and a scattered display of empty money-bags and torn pieces of paper on the floor. "Have you got it? Ordinary train to Folkestone? Yes, that's better than the boat express! Go on, what time does it start? Half-past-eleven! We can just catch it! Where from? London Bridge. You go

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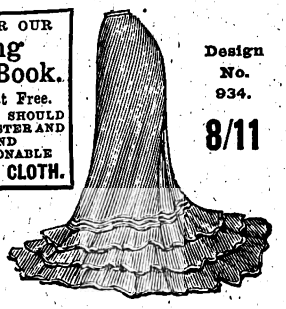

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out first, take a hansom! tell the man to drive like the dickens!—buy the tickets and wait at the train-side for me. It's a quarter to eleven now!"

Hastily unlocking the door of communication, Montague assumed an air of unconcern as he passed through the outer office, hailed a passing hansom, and dashed off as fast as the Strand traffic would let him, in the direction of London Bridge.

Scarcely a minute after another cab drew up before the door of 1001, out of which stepped Cyrus Hoffman and Sir Arthur Stanesby.

It was the latter who addressed a request to the cashier to see the secretary on important business.

It so happened that when Montague passed through, everybody thought that Fitchett accompanied him, the counter being crowded at the time with customers.

"Mr. Mortimer is out, sir," was therefore the reply. "Just gone out."

"When will he be in?"

"I really can't say. Is it anything I can do for you; the opening of an account, or——"

"No," said Hoffman, speaking for the first time. "We will wait a bit on the chance of his coming in soon. We must see him personally."

No one saw the white face of the secretary looking through an ingeniously contrived narrow slit in the door between the panel mouldings.

Not a sound came from the room. To all intents and purposes the cashier was right, and the room empty.

As is very unusual in such cases, there was no second outlet from it, so that, like a rat in a trap, Fitchett could only hope to tire out his beleaguerers.

At the end of half-an-hour, Hoffman, without consulting anyone behind the counter, suddenly moved toward the inner-room door and opened it.

It was a faint click apparently from within, which had caught his ear and prompted his action.

Throwing open the door the disordered state of the room struck him at once as suspicious.

The safe was shut.

Before he could call to Sir Arthur to join him, a clerk hurried forward and remonstrated warmly.

"My good fellow!" said Cyrus Hoffman quietly, "Don't distress yourself, except, perhaps, in that by this time to-morrow you will be out of a situation."

"But——"

"There, there!" interrupted the American impatiently, "Call in a policeman—or two, if you can find them."

It was now the baronet's turn to appear non-plussed.

"My dear sir, what are you going to do?" he asked. "What do you suspect?"

"Oh, just a clever little stage trick, that's all!"

As he spoke Mrs. Hoffman walked into the bank and handed in her cheque over the counter for £100.

This was a bit of business "upon her own," as it were, her husband having given her full permission to get the money if she could, and to keep it for her own private use.

It seemed that no cheques were paid out except on reference to the secretary-manager, and as he was out, payment was, for the time being, refused.

This alone would have been sufficient to "tell the tale," but when an hour later, in the presence of an inspector of police and two constables, a locksmith and his assistant forced the safe in the private room, its inside revealing Secretary Mortimer Fitchett with the whole of his plunder on and at the side of him, the whole affair took on its true complexion.

"A near shave of getting boxed up for good," said the inspector, chuckling. "Never meant to pull the safe door right to, did you? Why, if it isn't Fitchett! There's a piece of paper wandering round after you, my friend; so we'll see if we can't bring you together."

"Inspector, there is my card!" said Sir Arthur, "and I charge this man with attempting to obtain twenty thousand pounds from me by fraudulent representations. Mr. Hoff—— why, where is the gentleman who came in with me," he asked of an open-mouthed junior clerk.

"Went out, sir," was the stammered answer, "just as the smith gave the last prize at the safe."

"That's most extraordinary! Oh, well, I shall find him at the hotel when I get back."

But he didn't, for the porter said in reply to inquiry that Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Hoffman had left the hotel more than an hour before; it was believed for the Continent. They took care to keep out of the way of the police in case their connection with the Great Shah Syndicate might be discovered.

* * * * *

The energetic promoter and secretary of the "Associated Bank" paid, with a term of ten years' penal servitude, the little account between himself and an indignant public.

It was one of the very few accounts he may be said to have ever paid in full.

Small depositors, and defrauded shareholders, alone were left mourning, for though the money found packed ready for removal went a little way towards reimbursement, it was only a very little way, and, although Sir Arthur Stanesby has cause for self gratulation on the score of his lucky escape, not a few who could ill afford to lose their money bitterly regret to this day their temporary faith in the "Associated Banking Co.," and its founders.

Ralph Enderby.

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Pursued by Savages.

A True Story by a London ex-Constable.

"It's no use, Mary, women *do* admire brave men, and properly so, too, I think. Now just you read this series of experiences through which this officer passed in the execution of, not his mere duty, but one of the bravest deeds ever done."

So saying, Edith Avondale handed her friend an issue of the morning paper which contained the following sensational statement:—"My name is Alexander Robert Heffernan, and I live at 53 Archel Road, Fulham.

"We—the Heffernan's—are quite a soldier's family. I married a soldier's daughter, and each of my sisters is the wife of a soldier. I was in the North Staffs. Infantry Regiment—better known as "the 64th" for twelve years, and went through the second Zulu campaign, during which, on one occasion, Cetewayo's son, with an enormous army of gigantic black warriors, made us run. It was a good job we did too, for we were fearfully outnumbered, and had we not retreated, there would not have been one of us left alive. However, in the end we came out all right; and in 1891 I came home from Africa, and joined the Metropolitan police force.

"I was always a good athlete. They made me one of the T Division Metropolitan Police Cricket Team the very year I joined. I bowled in every match, usually taking the largest number of wickets, and I made the record number of top scores. The District Railway Cricket Team also used to get me to play for them.

"And how did you come to have to be pensioned off?" queried the reporter. "Ah," replied the ex-constable. "It was all through that affair in the Regent's Canal. It was on the afternoon of February 26th, 1897. I was on duty, when I was told that a man had jumped into the Regent's Canal. Rushing to the place I threw off my overcoat, and dived in to rescue him. The water at that point is made very poisonous by the refuse from the chemical works and the gasworks in the district draining into it, and the chemicals were fizzing and spluttering in the water all around us as we struggled. I was struggling in the poisonous water for twenty minutes. The man cursed me terribly, and continued to try and free himself in order to jump back into the water, even when I got him on the bank. It was some time before I could get my wet clothes changed, and I caught a terrible chill. But that was not the worst of it. The poison had got into my system and the stuff which killed the man I had rescued—for he died a few weeks after from poisoning—nearly killed me too! I began by being unable to digest my food, or even to keep it on my stomach. As soon as I had taken a meal I vomited it all back again. Of course I was placed on the sick list, and the police doctor told me that the poison in the water, which I had swallowed, had completely destroyed the coating of my stomach. The police were very kind to me, and sent me down to the Convalescent Home at Brighton twice. After the second visit I had to go back to my own home very bad indeed. I was so weak that when I attempted to walk I went blind, and had to cling to anything near me to prevent me from falling. I had fearful night sweats, and would often be seized with a kind of cramp, which seemed to be in my very bones. I could not retain food or nourishment, except in minute quantities—just enough to keep me alive

"I next went into Brompton Hospital, and there they declared it impossible to satisfactorily diagnose my ailments. For two years I remained in the police force, suffering in this way, and during the two years I was only able to put in three months' duty. Seeing that I was practically done for, in January 1899, I was given a special pension, and retired from the force.

"I continued to suffer as badly as ever, and went to the Seaford Hospital in Sussex. They gave me every attention but after a month's treatment I came back worse than ever. No matter how tempting and light the food which was prepared, I vomited all I took, and the very sight of food made me sick! I became reduced in weight to just over 10 stone, and I was as weak as a kitten. The vomiting, the pain across the stomach, and in the back, the night sweats and the cramping sensations continued until September in last year.

"In that month I tried some Bile Beans. A few doses made me somehow feel livelier, so I went in for a course, in order to give them a fair trial. By the time I had taken a few boxes I was a different man. The vomiting had stopped, and the dull, aching pain at the pit of the stomach had gone. Every day I got stronger and stronger. The cramp and the night-sweats stopped, the specks and flashes before my eyes disappeared, I became able to walk without needing support, and at night I enjoyed sound, refreshing sleep. To cut a long story short, I am now quite cured. The effects of the poison have been driven out of the system by the Beans and my stomach and digestive organs seem to have been re-made. I have eaten so well that I have gained twenty-one pounds in weight and am still adding to it. For the first time for nearly five years I was able to eat and enjoy a good Christmas dinner.

"Two months ago I was able to restart work as attendant in a picture gallery. For three weeks before Christmas I was at work there from half-past eight o'clock in the morning to half-past eleven at night, Saturdays included, and I did not feel fatigued with it.

"In my case Bile Beans seem to have worked a miracle. Publish my statement by all means, and let as many people as possible know that, amongst all the advertised remedies, there is one which does not depend for its sale on mere written advertisements, but upon living men and women whom it has saved from the grave. My case is one instance of its power, and the medicine is Chas. Forde's Bile Beans."

The above quoted account is true in every detail and was told to a London *Sun* reporter who interviewed Mr. Heffernan. The great lessons to be learned from it are these: Don't compare Bile Beans with ordinary medicine. They are entirely different and superior. Don't think that, because ordinary prescriptions and remedies have failed to cure a certain case, that Bile Beans will necessarily fail also. Finally, don't think that any case is too bad for Bile Beans to touch.

BILE BEANS FREE.

The Bile Bean Manufacturing Co. will send you a free sample box of Bile Beans if you forward this coupon to their Central Distributing Depôt, Greek Street, Leeds (Yorks), along with full name and address and a penny stamp to pay return postage.

FREE SAMPLE COUPON.
BILE BEANS.
Short Stories, March 15th, 1902.

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ASHAMED.

WHY?

False shame is a robber. It takes from us our pleasures, joys, and rightful inheritances, and gives us nothing in return. Is a woman ashamed of desiring beauty or a man of acquiring strength? According to the publishers of Professor Boyd Laynard's great work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE, there are hundreds of thousands of such cases. In a recent interview with the publishers the following statement was made: "It is perfectly astounding the thousands of letters we are receiving from the public requesting us to send Professor Laynard's work privately packed! Of course we have always made a custom of doing so; but why people should be ashamed of receiving such a book is beyond our comprehension and very uncomplimentary to the Professor, who is the greatest living authority upon personal hygiene. But for all this, the sale of his work in the English language is rapidly approaching one million copies. Hindustani and Malayalam are among the latest translations of Professor Laynard's famous book."

A REMARKABLE OFFER.

The publishers have issued a complete edition, at a price within the reach of all, so that the book may find a place in every home. The work is arranged in 127 chapters, the whole of which (in the popular edition now offered to the public) is bound in one volume. The book, although published at Two Shillings, will, if ordered direct from the Publishers, be forwarded to readers of Short Stories, carriage paid, at the low discount price of

ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

WONDERFUL CONTENTS.

Among the numerous subjects dealt with, in this unique publication, the following are but a few. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS,** enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the Publishers:—

Analysis of beauty—Beauty a possible attainment—The way we make our own faces—Secrets of face transformation—Changeableness of beauty and its causes—Some strange facts concerning the variableness of beauty—"Odd-faced" beauty—The countenance the counterpart of the mind—How pleasing expressions become permanent—How a person's habitual look is acquired—How permanent expressions can be transformed—Metaphysical secrets of keeping young and preserving a youthful appearance—The author's investigations into the causes why some individuals look younger than others at a certain age—Wonders of the skin—Effects of mental emotions upon the skin—Bad complexions and their causes—Diet that spoils and diet that improves the complexion—General care of the complexion—Construction, growth, and wonders of the hair—Why hair falls out—Premature greyness: its causes and prevention—General care of the hair—Superfluous hairs and how to treat them—Wrinkles: their prevention and treatment—Freckles, tan, and blackheads—Oily skin, dry skin, and loose skin—How the nose can be improved—Protruding ears and their treatment—Offensive breath—Anatomy of the teeth—Why teeth decay—General care of the teeth—Tallness, and how to attain it—Round shoulders and how to cure them—How to acquire a full chest—Perfect form and figure: their proper proportions—Thinness, and its treatment—Excessive stoutness—Care of the hands—Care of the feet—Physiognomy; or, the art of reading character from the face—Mental influences upon health—Power of the mind over the body—Influence of the mind in curing diseases—How violent passions injure health—Laughter as a medicine—Ailments cured by laughter—Wonders of digestion—Relative value to our bodies of the principal articles of food—Fruits and vegetables as medicine: their various influences upon the physical system—Health-preserving diet and its consistency—Diet favourable to mental exertion and intellectual culture—Influence of various foods upon our passions and propensities—The influence exerted by the mind upon the appetite and digestion—Some perilous articles of food—Exercise and its relation to health—Baths and bathing: their influence upon health—The way we breathe, and how it affects our health—The marriage state, and its influence upon health—Statistics showing the comparative vitality of married and single persons—100 professions, trades, and occupations: their respective influences upon health and long life—Sleep, and its relation to health—Insomnia, and its treatment—The eyes, and how to preserve them—The ears and hearing: how to prevent deafness—The voice: its cultivation and preservation—Memory, and how to improve it—Sudden failure of memory—Rules for cultivating the memory—Influence of diet upon memory—Stammering, and how to cure it—Prevention of disease—Nervousness—Blushing: its physiology and treatment—Rules of life for attaining longevity—How to live to a hundred—Premature old age and its causes—Short biographies of 30 modern centenarians, whose ages range from 115 to 185 years—General principles that can be laid down for the anticipation of longevity—The eight signs of long life.

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

Owing to private reasons, all Cheap Editions of this work will shortly be withdrawn.

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19, 21, and 23 Ludgate Hill, London.

Please forward me Professor Boyd Laynard's complete work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE" (carriage paid), for which I enclose the sum of One Shilling and Sixpence.

Name.....

Address.....

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No Chance.

School Teacher (trying to explain what a brother-in-law is): "Now, look here, my boy, have you a sister?" Tommy: "Ah, sir, it's no good, she has three young men already. You wouldn't be in it."

Very Good Reason.

Mrs. Burns has two boys and loves both tenderly. John, the younger, said: "Mamma, I love you more than you do me." "I think not, my dear. But why do you think so?" "Because you have two children and I have only one mother."

Once Bitten!

He (shortly after the introduction): "Excuse me, miss, but do you think you could ever love me if—well—if you should try?" She: "Well, I must say this is——" He: "Oh, don't be offended. It cost me more than £100 to find out whether the last one loved me or not, and I've got to economise, you know."

She Wanted a Copy.

Mistress: "I found in your room a letter of mine that had been taken out of my writing-case. What is the meaning of this?" Cook: "Oh, ma'am, I only wanted to copy it for my sweetheart." Mistress: "What can he want with it?" Cook: "Please, ma'am, he's in the Army, and he doesn't know how to write me a love-letter."

Better Thus.

Miss Saged (to veterinary surgeon): "Oh dear, Mr. Simpkins, I am so afraid dear little Fido is going to have rabies." Mr. Simpkins (after careful examination): "Indeed, miss, I don't see any signs of it." Miss Saged (caressing him—Fido): "But his poor dear little tongue is always hanging out of his mouth." Mr. Simpkins: "That, my dear madam, is in accordance with a merciful dispensation of Providence. You see if it hung out of his ear, he might experience some little difficulty in drinking."

A Use For 'Liza Jane.

It took a shopkeeper in Oxford Street the other day every dram of will-power he possessed to keep from laughing outright at an old lady from the country who came to his establishment and began examining some pieces of cheap calico. She pulled at one piece first this way, then that, wetted it and rubbed it with her fingers to try if the colours were fast. Then she paused awhile, as if not yet satisfied. At last she cut off a piece with a pair of scissors, and, and handing it to a gawky-looking girl of about sixteen standing by her side, said: "Here, 'Liza Jane, you chew that an' see if it fades." 'Liza Jane raised it to her mouth and solemnly went to work.

Only Sheep.

Wealthy Stranger "Yes; and I made my money, every farthing of it, by my pen." Tompkins: "Ah! a novelist, or a dramatist, maybe?" Wealthy Stranger "Not me. I used to keep a sheep farm in New Zealand."

Catching a Husband.

An Austrian provincial paper lately contained the following advertisement: "A widow, who still possesses the entire wardrobe of her deceased husband, is disposed to enter into correspondence with a suitable gentleman, if such can be found, with a view to matrimony."

It Wouldn't Have Done.

"I can't give you any money. A stout, able-bodied fellow like you ought to be earning a living." "But I haven't any work, sir." "That's your own fault, I'll venture to say. You lack energy. You don't throw yourself into your work." "I wouldn't like to! Nor would you, sir." "Oh, I wouldn't, eh? Why not?" "I'm a gravedigger."

They would be Needed.

"Miranda," said the proprietor, "do you know anything about the parson that is going to have charge of the church in the next street hereafter?" "Yes," replied the saleswoman, "he's a tall, fine-looking man, about twenty-eight, and isn't married." "Miranda," said the proprietor, briskly, "you may put all the new bonnets in the shop in that front window at once."

Too Lazy for That.

"I hear that your brother is given to somnambulism?" "What's that?" "He walks in his sleep." "Well, that makes me smile. You don't know my brother. He is the laziest man in London. He wouldn't walk in his sleep, no matter how sound asleep he was. He is altogether too lazy I might not be surprised to hear that he had ridden in a 'bus in his sleep, but as for his walking, that is out of the question. He doesn't walk when he is wide awake if he can help it."

His Advice Wasn't Taken.

"Remember dear," said the venerable father, as he sent his youngest and most petted daughter away to boarding-school, "that all my hopes are now centred on you. Remember in all your struggles for intellectual supremacy, your triumphs, your defeats, and your temptations, that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." "I will, father," replied the weeping girl, and the train bore her away. Will it be believed that three years later that girl married a man who bore the villainous name of Gandershanks?

ENGAGED GIRLS!

It is always interesting to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed. If you want to know what sort of a person you are, send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 67—72." to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Monday, March 24th, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 67. LETTERS CUMULATIVE.

The figures in the following lines indicate the number of letters in the missing word. Each word must consist of the same letters as the preceding one with the addition of another.

1 Barnum show is ours, 2 which you see
Performing insects 3 and 4 and flea.
The 5 with the dwarf divides his food,
The ostrich-man is eating iron, wood,
And even 7 to a small extent,
Thus 8 the scheme by Nature meant.
One minstrel plays 9, fifes and drums,
The 10 artist fain would eat his thumbs.
Such freaks, exciting pity, wonder, mirth,
Attend our 11 around the earth.

No. 68. CHARADE.

In FIRST, as in a book is read,
By science on earth's page—
Like crowsfeet on Dame Terra's face—
The secret of her age.

And not alone in FIRST is seen
The record of the past;
For many a NEXT, with sparkling light,
Their gleam from FIRST have cast.

My WHOLE, a subtle plan employed,
In love or weary war;
Or, from my FIRST to snatch a NEXT
It hath been used before

No. 69. WORD DIAMOND.

From equivalents of the following form a diamond such that the words signified read the same both horizontally and vertically:

A consonant; an article in daily use; a palace for the wives of an Eastern noble; a degree of honour; a doctrine which a person believes; part of a verb, meaning to satisfy; a consonant.

No. 70. ACROSTIC.

The initials of equivalents of the following read downwards will give the name of a favourite summer pastime:

A fish; an island in the Mediterranean Sea; a country in North America; a town in Switzerland; a part of the body; an article of dress; an elevation; a fluid; a division of time; a flower.

No. 71. ARITHMETICAL PUZZLE.

Place the numbers from 1 to 49 in a magical square so that the sum of each horizontal and diagonal line may be 175.

No. 72. WORD SQUARE.

From equivalents of the following form a word square:

To fleece; a place of safety; to prevent; a well-known author; to go into.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 43 to 48.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mr. Thomas Howard, of Swini, Holderness, East Yorks.

A book has been forwarded to:

H. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull.
Miss J. Lawlor, 38 Douglas Street, Cork.
W. J. Barter, 38 Douglas Street, Cork.
J. Stokoe, 9 Suffolk Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.
J. G. Usher, Baltinglass Rectory, co. Wicklow.
M. W. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull.
Miss E. Bulleid, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate, E.
Miss D. Ryan, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham.
J. J. C. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.
H. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate.

SOLUTIONS.

43. Lanark, Leith, Aberdeen, Yeovil, Oxford, Oldham, Wolverhampton, Glasgow, London, Hawick, Leven.

44. BOW-LING. BOWLING.

45. Fun-era-l. Funeral.

46. Seven. Even. Eve.

47. Spaniel. Setter. Dingo. Rach. Talbot. Tike.

48. ISLE
SOIL
LIPS
ELSE

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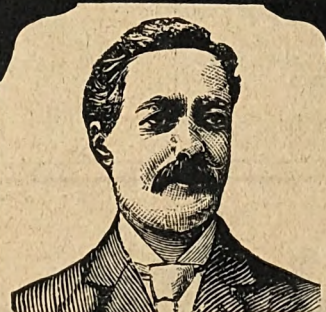

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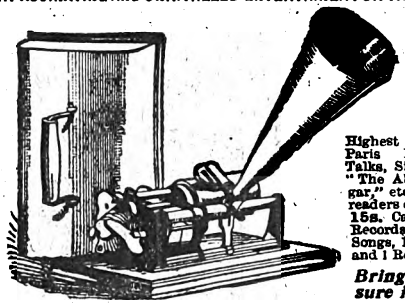

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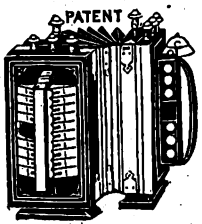

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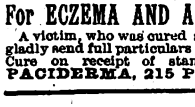

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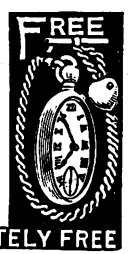

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SHORT STORIES

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The Opening of the Story.

GERALD MORTIMER lives with his widowed mother and a small brother and sister at Moulstone Manor House. A great friend of his is Dr. Branksome, medical attendant at Moulstone Asylum. One night when Gerald is returning from a visit to the doctor, he is encountered by a wild looking woman, in a long blue cloak, who appears to be waiting about for someone. Gerald asks her if he can help her in any way. She refuses help and suddenly rushes away. Gerald starts to follow but loses all trace of her in a thick wood.

At breakfast the next morning, news reaches the Manor House that one of the asylum patients has escaped. Gerald at once thinks of the woman he met on the previous night, but learns that the missing person is a man.

Nina Penhurst, governess to the Mortimer children, meets Gerald in the garden, after he has been to the asylum to tell Dr. Branksome of his previous night's encounter, and learns further particulars of the missing patient from him. Gerald tells Nina that the man thought he had been cheated out of some property, and that his name was Anthony, not Felix.

"Felix—Anthony—he thinks his name is Anthony—Anthony what?" she asks.

"Cordelvin—Anthony Cordelvin."

Nina Penhurst looks up quickly as Gerald Mortimer utters the name. Then she makes as though to step forward and falls in a dead swoon.

In a back street in Whitechapel lives a broken-down doctor, Ephraim Manisty by name. The night after the escape from Moulstone Asylum, he is visited by a man giving the name of Causton, who offers him a fee of £1,000 to amputate the left arm of a friend of his at Streatham. Manisty consents and drives off with Causton. They do not notice that they are followed by a cab containing a woman in a dark blue cloak. She watches them enter the grounds of the house at Streatham.

When Manisty sees his patient, who is in charge of Causton's son, he finds that nothing is the matter with his left arm, but on Causton threatening to shoot him if he does not perform the operation he consents to do it.

A week later Nina Penhurst and her two young charges, Harold and Gladys Mortimer, are out for a walk, during which they visit the ruins of Moulstone Castle. While the children are playing, Gerald comes on the scene, and declares his love for Nina. She says she cannot accept it, but gives no reason. Just at this moment a cry of distress is heard from Harold. Gerald rushes to the spot, and there finds that the boy has discovered the dead body of a man dressed in Asylum clothes, with his left arm missing, it having been clumsily amputated.

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The following day Gerald goes round to see Dr. Branksome, who tells him that he has received only that morning an anonymous letter containing £20 to pay for Felix Cordelvin's funeral. On seeing the letter Gerald finds that it is from Nina. Dr. Branksome's assistant comes in just at that moment to ask him to come and see one of the patients, and excusing himself to Gerald he goes out.

With eyes almost starting from his head Gerald gazes for a moment at the door as it closes behind the two doctors. Then his hands seek his throbbing temples.

"From her!" he gasps; "from Nina! Heavens, and Branksome is going to hand the letter over to the police. No, no, he must not! She is innocent—I swear she is innocent; but this anonymous letter in the hands of the police! No, they must not have it."

He steps to the desk as he speaks, pulls out the drawer with trembling hand, and once more holds the letter.

"Nina's handwriting!" he whispers hoarsely to himself, "there's no doubt of that. Fortunately Branksome is unable to recognise it. Nobody else must see it!" He springs towards the bright fire, and, bending down, thrusts the letter among the living coals. Then after watching the flames consume it he goes out, leaving a brief message of regret to Branksome with a servant.

In a house at Streatham, two men, Roderick Vanstone, who had passed under the name of Causton, and his son Stephen, are in conversation, from which it transpires that the elder Vanstone is the legal guardian of Nina Penhurst, who had lived with him for some time until his persecutions drove her away. Mark Cordelvin, a distant relative of Nina's who had adopted her, had an only son, Anthony, who was weak-minded, and to him Mark had left a life interest in his fortune, it having to go to Nina on Anthony's death. Owing to the latter's affliction, the care of the money was intrusted to Vanstone, who, taking advantage of Anthony's misfortune, was using it for his own ends.

On Gerald Mortimer's return from the asylum he suddenly resolves to go to London to find Nina, and set off by the first train. After dinner in London, he strolls along the Embankment where it is getting foggy.

"Please excuse me, but could you tell me whereabouts the Temple Station is?"

Gerald swerves round at the words.

"I know it is close by," the voice pursues, "but owing to the fog I am not quite sure where it is."

Gerald does not reply. He tries to but instead, he gasps out an exclamation.

For the voice that addresses him is the voice of a woman. And the woman is the woman with the blue cloak!

CHAPTER VIII. (*continued.*)

As Gerald Mortimer realised that the strange woman before him was the one whom he had met on the lonely road close to Moulstone Asylum, his heart quickened. For here within a couple of yards of him was the one person in the world who might throw light upon the murder of Felix Cordelvin. Light upon that deed was, indeed, of the supremest importance. Justice demanded it—the justice of England. But to Gerald there was something more insistent than justice and the law. There was the strong, inward demand; the personal craving for the exoneration from suspicion of the one girl who to him was more than all the world beside. If, then, this woman *knew*, and would speak what she knew, Nina Penhurst would be for ever rid of the network of circumstances which seemed to be gradually closing about her.

With such thoughts running like warning spirits through his brain, Gerald felt instinctively that this encounter might mean everything to him. It behoved him to maintain the utmost self-control, and to exercise the utmost care.

So, with her inquiry: "Can you please tell me where Temple Station is?" still in his ears, he pulled himself together and replied:

"I am walking in that direction and will show you." He paused a moment, and then added quickly:

"Excuse my question, madam, but were you not down in Kent a few days ago? Did I not meet you near Moulstone?"

The woman stopped dead, pressing her hand to her left side as if a bullet had struck her there. Even in the mist, Gerald could see that her face was working convulsively. Her voice trembled harshly as she answered:

"I do not understand! What have you to do with me? I must go. I can find my way alone!"

"Not so fast, madam!" returned Gerald, placing a restraining hand lightly on her shoulder. "Before you leave me you must answer my questions. Why were you in Moulstone that night?"

She shrank back within the shadow of the wall.

"Why do you ask?" she demanded. "Are you connected with the police?"

Gerald shook his head. "No," he replied, "I am nothing to do with them. But my question. I met you not far from Moulstone Asylum at midnight. Why were you there?"

"Had I not as much right to be there as you?"

"Assuredly; but you should be willing to account for your presence there in view of what has happened."

She looked up quickly with those strange burning eyes of hers.

"Ah, yes!" she murmured, "in view of what has occurred. I know, you mean the murder!"

"Yes; the murder of Felix Cordelvin, the lunatic who escaped."

At the mention of the name the woman's whole expression and manner changed. Hitherto she had spoken rationally and guardedly. Now, she blurted out with a hollow laugh:

"Fools—all fools! Murder of Felix Cordelvin! Ha, ha, ha! Fools, fools, all fools!"

She shook with a strange commingling of amusement and agitation. Her mood seemed one of madness. Gerald saw he had a difficult task to perform.

"Do you know anything of the murder of Felix Cordelvin?" he asked bluntly.

"Fools—all fools!" she repeated, rolling her head strangely. "Ask the panther or ask the cub, they will tell you! They're there!" She waved a gloved hand towards the Savoy Hotel as she uttered the apparently meaningless words: "Up there, they know all, and they can tell. I am going!" And in an instant she started off.

In a couple of strides Gerald was alongside her. In her present hysterical mood, it was hopeless, he saw, to question her. He must manage to see her again when she was calmer.

"Where do you live?" he demanded.

"Under the sun and the stars," she returned with another laugh.

"Madam, don't trifle. It is of the utmost importance I should know your address. What is it?"

She did not reply, but walked on in silence, her hands diving deep into her muff.

"If you do not tell me where you live," Gerald said sternly, "I shall follow you to your door. O-h! What have you done?"

His concluding words were accompanied by a moan of pain. His hands flew instinctively to his smarting eyes. For, from her muff, the woman had drawn out a small tissue bag of sand, and, even while Gerald was speaking, had suddenly swerved round and scattered it over his face. Even as he stood with his knuckles doubled in his handkerchief trying to clear his smarting sight of those gritty particles, he was conscious of the sound of the woman's retreating footsteps, and, utterly dismayed at the thought of losing track of her, he staggered on a step or two. But then he stopped. For the time he was completely blind, and the stinging sensation in his

His hands flew instinctively to his eyes, for, from her muff, the woman had drawn a small bag of sand and scattered it over his face.

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eyes was awful. Pursuit was hopeless. The echo of approaching footsteps reached his ears, slow footsteps of regular tread.

"Are you a police officer?" inquired Gerald as the steps drew alongside him.

The footsteps ceased.

"Yes, sir! Anything wrong?"

"I can't see you!" Gerald rejoined. "I have just been temporarily blinded by a woman."

The policeman's bull's eye was round in a second, and its shaft of light upon Gerald's face.

"Sand," muttered the officer, "thank God it ain't vitrol." He wiped some particles away as he spoke. "Best thing 'ud be for you to go to the hospital, sir—King's College Hospital. I'll take you if you like, sir."

A cab was hailed, and in five minutes drew up at the main entrance to the hospital.

CHAPTER IX.

An Important Envelope which was Overlooked.

"It's certainly most strange, Myers," remarked Dr. Branksome when, about ten minutes after Gerald Mortimer's departure, he returned to his sitting-room in the asylum. "I'll swear I put that letter back in my desk just when you came to fetch me. I've only been absent about a quarter of an hour, and now the letter's not to be found anywhere."

"It is peculiar," responded the other medical man, knitting his brows behind his spectacles. "And it's a very important letter, isn't it?"

"Most important! Likely, in fact, to furnish a clue to the murder. There's a man coming down from Scotland Yard to-day to investigate the affair, and now, hang it all, I'm unable to find what seems to me to be far and away the most important bit of evidence we've come across yet. It is annoying."

"But you left your friend Mortimer here, didn't you? Think he can have taken the letter away by mistake?"

"Impossible! I certainly gave him the letter to read, but then I distinctly remember placing it back in that drawer."

"But mightn't Mortimer have wanted to have another look at it?"

"Oh, he wouldn't go to my drawer. And yet——" Dr. Branksome suddenly pulled himself up. Then he added, "Oh, no, Mortimer couldn't have had it."

Nevertheless, the first thing that Branksome did after the departure of his colleague was to put on his coat and hat and make his exit from the asylum. He was bound for the Manor House.

At once, on sending up his name, he was admitted to the presence of Mrs. Mortimer.

"I am sorry, Dr. Branksome," she remarked in answer to his inquiry, "but Gerald has gone to town."

"To London? Has he really? He said nothing of his intention to me this afternoon."

"I don't think he had any intention of going then. He remembered some business he had to do, quite suddenly, and left by the next train."

"H'm, will he be back to-morrow, Mrs. Mortimer?"

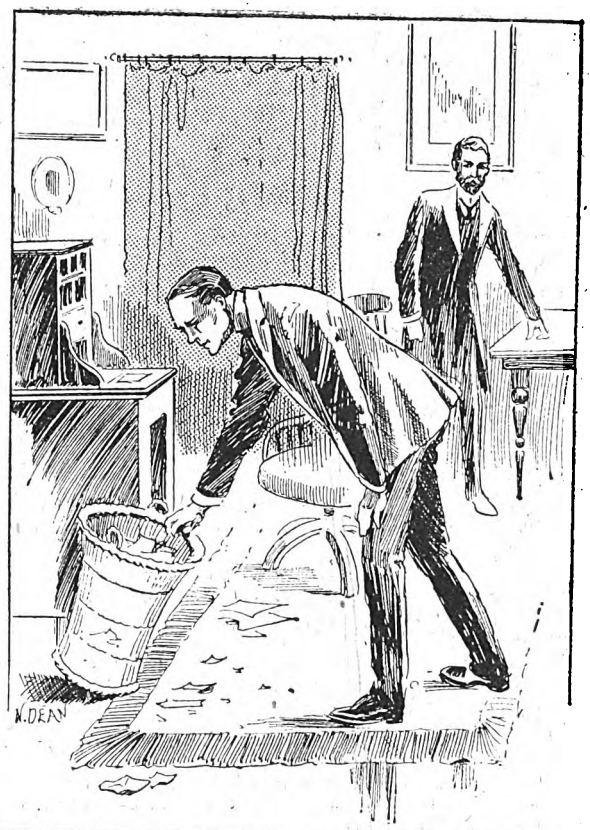
"He may be, or he may not be back for two or three days. Do you want to see him for anything important?"

Dr. Branksome fumbled with an album of photographs on a small table at his side. He did not want to discuss the matter of the letter with Mrs. Mortimer; it would necessitate so much explanation. He therefore dismissed the subject carelessly.

"Oh, my business will have to wait."

"You've no more news regarding the—the murder I suppose?" queried Mrs. Mortimer, changing the subject. "No new light on the affair."

"Nothing," the doctor replied, still idly turning over the leaves of the album; "nothing that is of any great im—— Oh, Good Heavens!"



Inspector Trench stepped nimbly towards a wastepaper basket standing near the desk.

Mrs. Mortimer rose in her chair at the doctor's exclamation.

"Why, what is the matter?" she asked concernedly.

For a moment Dr. Branksome did not speak, but sat rigid, staring fixedly at an inscription written on the first page of the album. Then, as the necessity for self-possession burst in upon his mind, he replied, with a faint attempt at a smile, snapping the album as he spoke:

"Pray excuse me, dear Mrs. Mortimer, but I had an awful twinge of neuralgia pain suddenly. I'm afraid I startled you. A thousand apologies."

Thus he slid over the matter, but a minute later he rose to go, pleading an engagement at the asylum.

Once in the open air, he mopped his perspiring brow.

"Great Heavens!" he murmured to himself solemnly, "I should never have thought of *her*. But that it's the same handwriting, I'd stake my life on. Poor Mortimer, he's in love with her. I see it all now. Mortimer took that letter to prevent my handing it to the police. Well, if it will save him any suffering, I'm glad he did, and I for one will never divulge my suspicions. And now he's gone to London to find her, I'll swear, and try to shield her from the law. What awful things do happen in this miserable world!"

He groaned aloud as he walked back towards the asylum.

"If my suspicions are correct," he said to himself presently, "I shall have to put the police off as much as possible for poor Gerald's sake. Poor chap, his must be a bitter load to bear."

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Hardly had he set foot in his apartments when a servant approached him.

"There is a gentleman waiting to see you, sir," the servant explained. "He won't give any name, but says his business with you is of the utmost importance."

"Show him in," replied Dr. Branksome, suspecting the true nature of his visitor's business.

A tall, well-built man of about forty was ushered into the room.

"I am Inspector Trench, of Scotland Yard," he observed quietly.

"Ha! pray be seated, inspector. You've come, of course, to find out all you can about this murder—a bad business, inspector, as it seems to me, a very bad business."

The detective bowed acquiescence, as one who would rather get to active business than waste time in discussion.

"I understood from the local police," he remarked quietly, "that you have to-day received an anonymous letter, inclosing the sum of twenty pounds for the burial of the murdered man."

The doctor bowed.

"That is so," he assented.

"I should like to see that letter."

Dr. Branksome shifted nervously in his chair.

"Inspector," he said, "it's extremely unfortunate, but the letter has been lost," and forthwith he plunged into a recital of the circumstances surrounding its disappearance. The detective listened quietly and respectfully to the end. Then he asked:

"Did you open the letter in this room when you received it."

"Yes," replied the doctor, wondering at the drift of the question.

"Ah, that's good!" ejaculated Inspector Trench; "then we shall probably find the envelope in here," and he stepped nimbly towards a waste-paper basket standing near the desk, on which his eyes had been fixed for the past few minutes.

Dr. Branksome's heart sank. The letter was missing and the valuable evidence it contained removed, but the envelope had been overlooked, and would be quite sufficient to establish identity of handwriting. Poor Gerald Mortimer, why didn't you think of this damning envelope.

"How stupid of me," said Dr. Branksome, striving hard to get a note of cheerfulness into his voice, "I never thought of the envelope."

"We do forget things of that sort sometimes," replied the detective, who was busy sorting the contents of the basket on the table. "Now then, doctor, which was it contained the missing letter?"

Branksome eyed the range of torn papers. The grey ribbed envelope was the one undoubtedly, but in the officer's appeal for assistance he thought he saw a way of throwing him off the trail. He eyed the envelopes for a moment, and then pointed to one which he knew had contained nothing more than a letter of inquiry regarding a patient.

"I think it's that one," he observed, wincing inwardly at his perversion of the truth.

"Ha, you *think* it's this one, doctor, but you're not sure. Then it will be safer for me to take the lot," and so saying the detective collected all the envelopes together and placed them in his pocket. Poor Dr. Branksome! you thought to do your friend a good turn, but, reviled as Scotland Yard is, its officers are not to be tricked by such simple means as you employed.

"I think you said that you left a Mr. Mortimer in the room just before the letter was lost," the officer inquired lightly.

"I did say so," replied the other, "merely so that you should know all I know."

"Of course, of course, merely that; there is no suggestion that Mr. Mortimer knows anything of the missing letter—of course."

"Exactly! Mr. Mortimer is a friend of mine, my oldest and dearest friend, in fact."

"Quite so, and therefore quite incapable of—quite so, quite so! Well, good evening, Dr. Branksome. It's a queer case, so little to go on you know, but we'll do our best. Good evening!" and the officer bowed himself out in the politest of fashions.

He filled his pipe as he walked along the asylum drive, passed a cheerful remark to the porter about the beauty of the night, and then paused, fifty yards away, to strike a match.

"Now, what's this Dr. Branksome's game?"

He put the question bluntly to himself, and pondered it as he puffed at his pipe.

"What's he trying to hide? Why does he pretend not to recognise the envelope? He's shielding this chap Mortimer—his oldest and dearest friend, that's what he's doing, and he's doing it very clumsily indeed. But why's he doing it at all? What does Mr. Mortimer know of the business, and why should he annex a letter that doesn't belong to him? Is he on the shielding tack too? Jack Trench," he concluded, still addressing himself, "you're hungry now, and you've got to get a steak across your chest. But when you've satisfied the inner man, you've got to get on the war path, that's what you've got to do, Jack."

* * * * *

"Now, how do I stand," soliloquised Inspector John Trench, late that night, as he sat in a private room of Mr. William Loppidge's hostelry in Moulstone village. "I've found out that Mr. Gerald Mortimer is sweet on Miss Nina Penhurst, the young lady who's run away, for no cause whatever, from a nice comfortable berth, and what's equally important, I find that supposing this envelope here" (and he indicated the grey ribbed covering previously mentioned) "contained the anonymous letter, why, then, Miss Nina Penhurst wrote it. For I'd swear these two handwritings are the same any day." And here he placed the envelope alongside a written order addressed to Mr. Seddon, the village butcher, and signed on behalf of Mrs. Mortimer, by "N. Penhurst."

"Mr. Gerald Mortimer's gone to London, I find, called up on unexpected business. It's merely a coincidence his following Miss Penhurst so soon, of course." Here the officer gave a little ironical snigger. "But it's a little more than a coincidence that the letter which the gentleman stole should be the identical one which the lady wrote. And young gents don't steal letters for nothing. But it's time you went to bed, Jack, you've to be up early in the morning. You've got to leave the pure, sweet air of Moulstone, and get back to grimy London again."

CHAPTER X.

Nina Penhurst has an Exciting Adventure.

In a small cottage, situated in the rural suburb of Roehampton, sat two women, busily sewing. One was old and the other young, and just as distant as their ages was an undeniable difference in their social position. The stout, roundness of face, the large hands coarsened by years of hard household work, stamped the elder woman as belonging to the old-fashioned servant class; while in the delicate-featured girl who sat opposite to her it was easy to recognise refinement and good breeding.

Although the latter on occasions would give unmistakable proofs of her industry with the needle, a close observer could not have failed to notice that her heart was not really in her work. For every now and then the expression of her eyes would seem to become fixed, the play of her fingers over her work would slacken gradually, until at length they would stop altogether.

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And then her eyes would take unto themselves a greyness and an aspect of deep thought, which for the time would seem to put years on to her life.

One of these fits of abstraction attracted the old woman's attention presently.

"There you go again, Miss Nina," she remarked, "forgetting your work, and thinkin', thinkin'. Why don't you try and cheer up a bit, dearie? I'm sure it's far too beautiful a day to be miserable. Look at the sun on the trees—it's lovely."

Nina Penhurst, whom the old lady addressed, looked up.

"I'm sure I ought to be happy here, Martha," she said with a sad smile. "Nothing to worry me, and always the dear face of my old nurse to look upon. But, somehow, I can't help thinking to-day. Martha," she added suddenly, "I want you to tell me all you know about Felix Cordelvin."

It was the old lady's turn to be surprised now.

"You are worrying too much about Felix Cordelvin, my dear," she said, "more than is good for you. Poor man! it's sad that he met with the end he did, but it's no good to fret and worry over it as you're doing."

"I'm not fretting," replied Nina, "I can't grieve, because, as I never saw him to my knowledge, I have no sense of personal loss. But I can't help thinking about the matter, because, after all, he was a relative."

"A relative!" repeated the old lady, with just a tinge of indignation in her tone. "Maybe he was, but distant enough in all conscience—third or fourth cousin, I can't say which. Mr. Anthony's as near a relative as you are, and he's rich; why didn't he see to the burial of Felix Cordelvin, instead of your having to part with——"

"Hush, Martha, dear!" interrupted Nina, "I sent quite of my own free will, feeling it to be the least I could do. I should have gone down to see him buried, but for reasons which I have already given you, I did not wish Mrs. Mortimer to see me or know of my whereabouts. As for my uncle Anthony, he would, I am sure, have buried his cousin had he been aware of the necessity. But you know the state of his mind!"

"Oh, yes, I know that!" assented old Martha Nainby, "and I don't blame him. It's Mr. Vanstone that I blame. He's got charge of the property; why didn't he see to it?"

"It's useless to speculate on that point, Martha, and it's useless to ask me. I understand Mr. Vanstone just as imperfectly as you do, and I like him as little as you."

"Which means that you don't like him at all then," snapped Martha vehemently. "He's your guardian, Miss Nina, leastways he was, and he's trustee for all your property; but, asking your pardon for the liberty, I think he's a rascal. Why ever didn't dear old Mr. Mark make a will like other people, and leave you to come into the money at twenty-one, instead of leaving it all in charge of Mr. Roderick Vanstone?"

"You forget, Martha, that great-uncle Mark's chief

She felt herself lifted up and swung twice backwards and forwards through the air.

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desire was to provide for his son Anthony. But there! I think we've talked quite enough, and as I don't feel much in the mood for needlework, I think I'll take a walk on the common. It's a lovely day, and I'll take my sketch-book out with me. If I'm to take pupils, I shall have to keep up my drawing, shan't I, Martha?"

Far away over in that corner of Wimbledon Common which is farthest from London, and which abuts on the Kingston Road, there lies tucked away in a hollow, a lake known as Queensmere. Framed by green banks, upon which stately pines grow, and upon which, in summer time, ferns flourish in lavish profusion, it makes a pretty picture. It is a bit of scenery which, come upon suddenly by the jaded Londoner, is apt to surprise by its quiet, seclusion, and unexpected beauty. For it looks to be like a bit of Cumberland—planed down, it is true—carried away on a freakish witch's broom and dumped down near to London, to give to weary town-dwellers an idea of what rural England has to offer them.

To this spot came Nina Penhurst on this January afternoon, three or four days after her hasty departure from Moulstone Manor House. Although the season was winter, the sun shone with such unusual power as well-nigh deluded out-of-door people into the belief that it was spring. Tempted by the warmth and the joy of the sunlight on the water, Nina sat down on a rustic bench near and prepared her sketch-book. But though she tried she could not concentrate her mind upon her drawing. Her pencil flitted absently over the paper for a few minutes, and then, as with the sewing, she fell once more into a fit of abstraction.

Vaguely her mind reviewed the events of the past few days; the murder of Felix Cordelvin, Gerald Mortimer's declaration of love, and her own sudden flight. A tear welled up from her heart as she thought of Gerald. What did he think of her now? Did he love her now?—now that she had so unceremoniously left his mother's roof? God knows, she loved him fondly, but he must never know that. Within her breast was a terrible secret, a secret she dare not divulge to Gerald Mortimer, but which must unquestionably prevent her from ever marrying. Better, then, that she should have run away as she had done, better for him, better for her, and——

"Carlo! come here, sir!"

The voice, a man's, broke in upon her thoughts from behind, and a strange feeling that she knew the voice filled her mind. At the same moment, she caught sight of a big retriever dog close by.

She started, and then obeying an irresistible impulse, looked round. Within twenty yards of her stood the man who had called out. He, too, affected surprise as he raised his soft felt hat.

"Miss Penhurst—is it possible?" he said, and advanced towards her with outstretched hand.

She dropped her hands resolutely to her side, and half-turned away, with set face.

"Cold as ever to me," the man said quietly, noting the action. "I had hoped that after nearly three months parting you might have changed."

She turned and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Mr. Vanstone," she said sternly, and with something like contempt in her look, "I must ask you not to refer to the past. I thought, indeed, it was fully understood that we were not to meet again."

"Ah! but you see," returned Stephen Vanstone, for it was he, "Providence seems to have conspired to upset so unsatisfactory a programme. May I take it as a good omen?"

A withering glance came out of her eyes, but she spoke no words.

"It is useless," he burst out, coming closer to her, "useless to scorn me as you are doing. At sight of you all the love of the past years is revived in me. As I look at you now, beautiful in your very wrath, I feel that life without you is a hopeless blank. Nina,"—he was striving now to infuse a softness into his voice that ill accorded with its natural harshness, "Nina, I beg you to try and forget that you hate me. Say that some day you may learn to love me."

He strove as he spoke to get possession of her hand. But she snatched it resolutely away as if stung.

"Mr. Vanstone!" she cried, and all her pent-up indignation and contempt seemed expressed in that cry. "If you are a gentleman, nay, if you have but one spark of manhood in you, you will leave me at once."

He recoiled a step at the very vehemence of her scorn; but a second later he recovered himself. An ugly look came into his eyes.

"Leave you!" he replied, "that I will never do. I have told you that I love you. You have scorned my love, have spurned it as if it were a thing of no account. I tell you you shall learn to love me yet."

"Leave me!" she repeated. "You do not know what you are saying."

He stepped forward again.

"Perhaps I don't!" he said in a strange, hollow tone; "perhaps I don't know what I am saying. Maybe, I am mad with love for you. I believe I am. Here, give me your hand! I'll make you listen to me!"

"I refuse to listen to you!"

"You jade! I'll make you. Your hand, I say, your hand in true lover fashion."

He laughed a cruel, hoarse laugh as he spoke, and forcibly seized her hand. There was a look as of a devil upon his face. He clasped her round the waist, she struggling helplessly in his cruel grip.

"Let me go!" She was shrieking now, her face white as snow.

"A kiss! I'm going to kiss you!"

She swung herself round as he uttered the words, and with a great effort released her hand. Then with all her force she struck him full in the mouth.

The force of the blow, and the realisation of the feelings which had prompted it, stung the man to fury. He seized her again, heedless now whether he hurt her or not. Then with a sudden wrench, he swung her round and dragged her forward. Before her startled eyes lay the cold waters of the lake, and to her affrighted senses there shot in the thought of what he was going to do. One more wild shriek she gave, and then she felt her feet leave the ground and her body lifted up and swung twice backwards and forwards through the air. The rippling waters of the lake seemed to pass out of sight, a fearful buzzing filled her ears, and then she knew no more.

(To be continued.)

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A Chance Meeting

The Righting of Two Love Affairs.

"Then it is all over between us?" said Alice in a dreary tone. She would like to have felt George's arm round her waist, and his face near hers whispering words of love to a willing listener; but she wouldn't have had him know this for the world, because George was clearly in the wrong and it was his place to make it up.

"I suppose it is," George repeated, trying to speak indifferently; how he longed to take her in his arms again, but she was in the wrong and he wasn't going to give in to her.

Alice put out her hand.

"Then I will wish you good-evening, Mr. Henson," she said with pronounced emphasis on the surname and just the slightest possible suspicion of a tremor in her voice.

"I will see you to your home, Miss Murphin," George replied, feeling that the resumption of the surname which they both intended to sound dignified was a farce, but a farce with a tragedy in it.

"You need not trouble," replied Alice, hoping all the time that George would trouble, since this would entail a last chance for reconciliation.

"Very well, if you are sure you don't mind," George returned, resolved to be as independent as she, however great the cost.

So the two foolish young lovers parted.

For three days they waited, avoiding each other with the utmost caution. Then George met Miss Amies, a fair-haired, blue-eyed, sweet little thing at a party. George fancied that he had made an impression, and a bright thought struck him.

"Now we shall see what will happen," he soliloquised, "when Alice finds that I can get another girl."

What George expected to happen is a query; he did not know himself, so it is impossible for us to tell. Anyway he went in for it hot, and stifled his heart by saying that the world thought Miss Amies the prettier of the two.

Yet comparisons would spring up, and always to the advantage of Alice; he liked the shape of her hand best, or was it the way in which she walked? Or was it that he preferred brown eyes to blue? The fact was, George loved Alice and could not love another; so he told himself that he was only flirting to bring Alice to her senses, though what he expected Alice to do when she came to her senses is a second query.

Well, the first time George took Miss Amies for a walk he contrived to pass Alice's house, but he could not see her at the window, which was disappointing. Also he learnt on this auspicious occasion that he might call Miss Amies "Annie," which ought to have elevated him a good deal, but somehow it didn't. Anyway, "Annie" began with the same letter as "Alice," which in some inexplicable way gave a slight consolation to his bleeding heart.

On a second occasion George was more fortunate, for they nearly ran into Alice at the corner of the street; with one swift glance she recognised him and coloured slightly. However, Alice recovered immediately, and, as George took off his hat, acknowledged him with a slight bow.

George smiled inanely, which he believed was a smile of lofty indifference, but which wasn't; after which he walked onward, with his head a little higher, his step a little longer, his heart beating very much faster, and feeling very much prouder of himself. What would Alice do? George tried to guess as he lay on his back in bed that night.

Perhaps she would write him a conciliatory note; he even thought out an answer:

"Dear Miss Murphin,

Since you acknowledge that you were in the wrong, I am quite willing to overlook it, and will call for you as usual, to-morrow night."

No, that was too impatient; he would leave out the "quite" and substitute "Thursday" for "to-morrow." But what if she should not write? Perhaps she would loiter about the office at which he worked and meet his careless glance with a supplicating look. He would not take it too easy; unconditional surrender was what he required, then he would freely forgive her and behave with the same kindness as before. And George almost shed tears as he thought of his own forgiving nature.

Alice resolved to act as she dashed the hot tears from her eyes that night.

For nearly a week George saw nothing of his former sweetheart; he grew each day more restless and irritable, and derived little benefit from his walks with Annie. One day, as George was coming home from the office, he saw Alice standing at a shop window which she was perfectly aware that he must pass. George passed, uncertain as to what would happen. Of course, this was a desire on her part to lure him back to love again. Things were coming right, but George required "absolute surrender." At that moment Alice glanced round; she treated her former lover to a cold glance of recognition and the slightest possible inclination of the head.

"That won't do, young woman," was George's mental comment, but he stopped at the next window and waited for Alice to come forward, and make it up. But Alice did not come forward, the position was embarrassing. Then a young man, tall, dark, and of good deportment, stepped from the shop, and Alice took his arm, as naturally as she had formerly taken George's.

"I am awfully sorry to have kept you waiting so long, dear, but the fellow was so stupid——"

This much George heard as he tore away. He was in an awful rage. He had not conceived that Alice could play the same game as himself. He had left things to right themselves, but instead they had gone to rack and ruin. George rushed home and spent half the night in parading up and down the room, and then he sat down and scribbled:

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"Dear Alice,

If I may call you by that name, I am sorry we ever fell out, though, of course, you will be willing to admit that you were mostly in the wrong. Anyway, dearest, I should be glad to let bygones be bygones. Please write at once and say that you are ready to make it up."

The answer came next evening, and George hung over the dear handwriting on the envelope. After all he wished he had not been so impatient, if he had waited he might have gained a more glorious victory; in fact, this was hardly a victory at all, it was almost a defeat. Then he tore open the letter.

"Dear George,

I am sorry I can't comply with the suggestions contained in your letter, but I showed it to Ernest and he says that he has no objection to you considering yourself one of my most intimate friends; you may still call me Alice if you like, Ernest says. It may be some consolation for you to know that I was first attracted to Ernest by the manner in which he twisted the ends of his moustache, the same identical way as you have—in fact, Ernest is a good deal like you in many ways, but without your bad temper. As for our quarrel, I have forgotten what it was about, so cannot be expected to say who was in the wrong, but we must both confess that it was Providential. Do not let this trouble spoil your life.

Your affectionate friend,

Alice."

It is impossible to describe George's mind; he tore the letter to pieces, and he tore the pieces to pieces, and he tore the pieces of the pieces to pieces. Then he gathered up the fragments, placed them in a tin lid and ignited the whole, a funeral pyre of past hopes and affections.

Could George have seen the hot tears which welled in Alice's eyes as she indited that epistle? Could he have seen how her heart throbbed and beat with love for him and him alone? But Alice was proud and angry and she had accepted the offer of another, so anyway George's letter came too late.

And she ran all the way to the post to dispatch the letter before the love which she bore George should overcome her anger and become dictatorial. Then she ran back to her own room and fastened the door and cried, and cried, and cried.

The next evening George called for Annie, and during their walk together asked her to become his wife.

"Before I accept your offer I must in honour confess that I have loved before and experienced a different emotion towards another from any feeling I have for yourself. Last year, while crossing from New York, I was thrown much in the company of a certain gentleman, but what I interpreted as love was merely gallantry on his part, for though I was foolish enough to give him my address I have never since heard from him."

"Oh, that doesn't signify in the slightest!" George returned.

"Then I am afraid you fail to understand my meaning," said Annie with a slight tremor. "I respect you, yes, I believe I feel also a certain kind of affection, but not that, shall I call it fascination?"

"Oh, I quite understand," George broke in, "and will repeat my offer. As for a lot of love and sentimental nonsense, I don't believe in it."

"If those are really your sentiments, I accept your offer and will do my utmost to make you happy."

It was quite a month later, when one evening George and Annie strolled into a café. It was not until they were seated and George had given the order, that he glanced up and noticed the couple opposite; as he did so, he paled a little, set his teeth hard and said something under his breath. Alice, for it was she and her new betrothed, glanced up at the same moment, and their eyes met. A distressed look came into her face in answer to his haughty stare; she turned instantly to her companion.

"Ernest," she cried, "take me away, I don't feel well!"

But Ernest was staring with all his might at the new comers and he answered in a mechanical tone:

"Yes, my dear, let us get out of this at once."

George had also turned to his lady-love, trying vainly to look debonair, and was astonished to find that she was trembling all over with emotion.

"Yes. I know her," he said savagely, fancying that he had divined what was passing through the girl's mind, "but you have no cause to trouble on her account."

Annie neither understood nor heeded his words; as the other pair were passing, she rose and extended her hand.

"Ernest," she said quietly, "after the very enjoyable passage we spent together we may at least meet as friends."

"No!" he answered without accepting the proffered hand and flashing his dark eyes upon the girl, "that time we spent together demands that we shall meet as more or less than friends. Why did you not answer my letter?"

"Letter! What letter?" she faltered.

"Strange forgetfulness, considering the contents," said the young man bitterly. Then a sudden light began to break upon him. "Annie, tell me, did you not receive the letter?"

"I have received no letter," replied the girl, "we have both been deceived."

Then George sprang up fiercely.

"You have robbed me of one girl," he cried, "you have dared to read my private letter, you shall not have both!"

"No, George, that about showing Ernest your letter was only a fib," faltered Alice.

"Had we not better talk it over quietly outside? There seems to be some mistake and we are exciting a good deal of attention here," suggested Ernest.

So they all four went out, Ernest and George together.

"Were you Miss Murphin's first young man?" queried Ernest.

"I was, and she threw me over for you," said George savagely.

"But she told me that she could never give me her heart, that she loved another, meaning you, but that you had quarrelled and neither would give in, but she respected me and would try to be a good wife."

"Why, that is just what Annie said to me!" cried George.

"And you love Alice? Yes, you do. I can read it in your face."

"Well, but she has treated me very badly!"

"Not so badly as you deserved if you had looked at her like that. This is what she said when I told her about my former attachment: 'Both our lives are a failure, however we look at it: let's make the best of a bad job, and even though we don't love we shall sympathise for each other, since we have both known a similar sorrow.'"

"Ernest," cried George impulsively, "let's swop!"

Then they joined the ladies.

A. S. M.

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The General's Gloves.

By LEVIN CARNAC.

"General Peter Golitzin, Chief of the Third Section, was taken ill at a ball given by Princess Willewald at her palace on the Gorokhovaya-Ulitza on Thursday night, and expired shortly before midnight yesterday, after an illness of less than forty-eight hours. The cause of death is stated as gouty affection of the heart. It is expected that in consideration of his own and his father's great abilities and faithful service, his Majesty will be pleased to appoint Colonel Nicholai, the deceased General's only son, and long-trusted assistant, to the vacant post."

Such was the official account of the death of one of the most devoted and merciless men who ever commanded that terrible official organisation which is known and dreaded by the Russians as the Third Section. It was published in the *Grashdanin* and the *Novoe Vremya* under the official sanction, and there was supposed to be an end of the matter, so far as the curiosity of all loyal subjects of the Czar was concerned.

That it was not true did not concern the public at large, but the fact did very intimately concern two sets of people as wide asunder as the East and the West. These were the inner circle of officialism on the one hand, and the Nihilist organisation on the other.

Among the former the death of General Golitzin produced a sensation which bordered closely on a panic, for the horror of the assassination of the Emperor Alexander II. was still fresh in the minds of men, the extraordinary precautions and almost barbarously stringent regulations made in the hour of terror, were still in force, and yet the invisible hand of Nihilist revenge had pierced the hedge of bayonets and the closely-drawn cordon of police and spies, and had struck down the Chief of the Third Section, and then vanished without leaving so much as a suspicion behind it.

The fact which was suppressed by the *Grashdanin* and the *Novoe Vremya*, if indeed their editors ever knew it, was that General Golitzin was murdered, or "removed," according to the different phraseologies of his friends and his enemies.

Even although the very circumstance of his death has long ceased to be a topic of conversation in the drawing-rooms of St. Petersburg, and though the officials have done their best to forget a mystery they were never able to solve, the true story of his death has never been told until now.

On the 3rd of September, 1879, Stanislas Lobanoff, Junior Professor in the Faculty of History at the Imperial University, published a very able monograph on the Inner History of the Times of Catherine II. Although there was nothing in the essay that could be twisted into a cause for prosecution it excited the displeasure both of the Court and the Bureaucracy, and thenceforward its author was a marked man, in other words a suspect, and to be a suspect in Russia is merely a preparatory graduation for imprisonment in a fortress or exile in Siberia.

When Alexander II. was murdered a year and a half later Stanislas Lobanoff was one of the hundreds of suspects who were swept into the official net, and he was one of those who never escaped.

Among a pile of manuscripts found in his room, were some which in the eyes of the police bore the plainest testimony to his revolutionary opinions, but what settled his fate was the finding of a letter from his father, Michael Lobanoff, in London, which contained a postscript in cipher which the police were unable to make out, and which he refused to translate.

It did not seem much on the strength of which to send a man of such brilliant promise to a living grave in Siberia, but in the eyes of Peter Golitzin, a man who hated the very names of learning and enlightenment with the blind hatred of a semi-savage covered with a thin veneer of civilisation, it was enough, and so the young professor was exiled by administrative process, and fell dead in his chains as the convict train to which he belonged was crossing the ice of Lake Baikal in the following March.

When he signed the order for Lobanoff's exile, the Chief of the Third Section knew that he was sending the lover of his orphan niece to a fate darker than death, but this knowledge, so far from influencing him to mercy, inspired him with a positive pleasure, for the idea that his niece and his sister's heiress should marry a beggarly professor of history, and, worst of all, a man of learning and advanced political ideas, was something worse than hateful to him.

Added to this, he had other views for Vera Matieff. He knew that his son Nicholai had been in love with her ever since he had left the military school, and a marriage between the cousins, though nominally forbidden by the Orthodox Church, could still be arranged by one who stood so high as he did in the favour of the omnipotent Czar.

So he sent Stanislas Lobanoff to his death in Siberia without a thought of the terrible injustice of his fate, or of the effect the monstrous sentence might produce upon the mind of the girl who loved the brilliant young professor with a passionate devotion of which Golitzin had not the slightest comprehension.

Vera herself gave no outward sign of the mental agony which her lover's fate inflicted upon her. She knew that it was hopeless, and that, so far as she was concerned, the grave had already closed over him when he left the central convict *depôt* at Moscow. What had been love and hope now became hate and longing for revenge. Her uncle, whom as a girl she had always looked upon with fear and dislike, she regarded, now that sorrow had changed the girl into a woman, with a

loathing and ever-watchful hate alike impossible and incomprehensible to anyone but a Russian.

A Russian woman can love with the passion of a Spaniard and the constancy of a German, and she can hate with the ferocity of an Italian and the patience of a Fleming. From the day that she knew she must henceforth mourn her lover as dead she lived with a single object in life, and that was the punishment of the man she looked upon as his murderer.

From hatred of her uncle to detestation of the system which was incarnated in him was but a step, and from this it was but a step further into Nihilism itself, and, as it happened, Vera Matieff was just the human material of which the most dangerous and relentless conspirators are made.

She recognised at once that her surest and shortest road to the most complete vengeance for what she looked upon as the murder of her lover and the ruin of her own life's happiness lay through the confidence of his official murderer. She therefore accepted his fate with well-simulated resignation, apparently believing that he had really been guilty of conspiracy against the Czar and confessing, to her uncle's unconcealed delight, that that was quite enough to prevent her ever thinking of him again, save as one who had gained her affection under false pretences.

More than this, she forced herself to look with less and less displeasure upon the advances of Nicholai, and at length confessed, not altogether insincerely, that some day, when the bitterness of her disappointment in her first love had worn off, she might be brought to look upon him as her future husband.

Thus she succeeded in gaining the absolute confidence both of her uncle and her cousin, and also managed to make herself so useful to the former in his most confidential official work that he at last permitted her to copy for him documents which he had hitherto permitted no eyes but his own and his son's to see, before they were submitted to the approval of the Czar.

It was in this way that she gained sufficient knowledge of the police secret cipher and her uncle's private code, to enable her to get a clear comprehension of the inner working of that frightful terrorism which lies like a blight over all Russian Society, from the moujik to the noble. This knowledge afterwards became in her hands a potent instrument of indirect revenge, and, by the horrors which it revealed to her, it also fixed her in her resolution to join the Nihilists.

About two years after the death of her lover she paid a visit to London with Princess Willewald, a cousin of her uncle's, and it was not long before she found an opportunity of communicating with her dead lover's father, Michael Lobanoff, who was carrying on business as a jeweller and diamond merchant in Martin Street, Holborn.

While she suspected that he had some connection with the Nihilist organisation, all that she actually knew was that he had left Russia several years before to avoid arrest as a suspect, and had been living ever since in exile. She felt that the bond existing between them rendered him the only man to whom she could safely confide her hopes and plans of revenge for the murder of her lover and his son.

If he proved to be a Nihilist, then she would give her allegiance to the Brotherhood through him; if not, no doubt he could still bring her into contact with those who would serve the same purpose.

Her card secured her instant admission to his private office, and as he rose from his seat to greet her she saw a white-haired, pale-skinned, keen-eyed man of about seventy. In reality Michael Lobanoff was barely sixty, but those who have felt the heavy hand of Russian tyranny usually look older than their years.

"You are welcome, Vera Matieff," he said, in Russian. "I knew you were in London with the Princess, but I scarcely dared hope that I should have been honoured with a visit. Does your jewel-case want replenishing, or have you come to me for a more serious reason?"

At the last words he fixed his clear grey eyes on hers, and she returned the glance steadily as she replied:

"For a more serious reason; one so serious that I I fear we cannot talk about it here."

"Ach!" he said. "I see. You have not forgotten, then?"

"No, nor yet forgiven. You understand, of course?"

He fell dead in his chains as the convict train to which he belonged was crossing the ice of Lake Baikal.

"Yes, I understand perfectly. Come upstairs and I will find you a place where you can speak without fear."

He moved towards an inner door, and opened it as he spoke. As she passed through he told his shopman that he was not to be disturbed for any purpose, and then he led the way upstairs to a small, cosily-furnished back room on the third floor. There, after closing a door which shut without the slightest noise save the click of a spring-lock, he gave her a chair, and said:

"There, sit down, and speak freely, for these walls have no ears, and this window no eyes."

She glanced up to the window as he spoke, and noticed that it was double, after the Russian fashion, and that the outside panes of glass were frosted.

"Now," he continued, seating himself opposite to her, "speak, and tell me what I can do for you?"

"Can you translate that?" she said, taking a little slip of paper from the bosom of her dress and handing it to him. He unfolded it, opened his eyes just a trifle wider, and then handed it back, saying:

"No. I think I know what it is, but there are only two men in the world who can read it."

"And they are?"

"Peter Golitzin, Chief of the Third Section, and his master, the Tyrant himself."

"Ah, then you recognise the private cipher! Now let us see if you can read this one?" and she handed him another slip. The moment his eyes fell upon it he rose from his seat and came to her, and, putting his hand upon her shoulder, said:

"Vera Matieff, that is a dangerous possession for the niece of Peter Golitzin to carry about with her! Why have you brought it to me, and how did you get it?"

"I will tell you when I know whether you can read it," she said quietly; "and if you will read it to me I will read the other one to you."

"What, you!" he cried, recoiling a couple of steps from her. "How is it possible——"

"Most things are possible to a Russian woman who has learnt how to hate," replied Vera quietly. "I have been acting as confidential secretary to my uncle for more than a year now, and little by little the clue to the system dawned upon me, and then a few weeks' work enabled me to read it.

"This is an extract from my uncle's private diary which no one else ever sees except the Czar—and myself.

"He has no idea that I know it, and so he has not been afraid to leave me alone in his study with it. It contains some strange secrets, I can tell you, and this is one of them. That other slip which I want you to read was also taken from my uncle's study. I can't read it, and that's why I want you to do so."

Michael Lobanoff hesitated for a few moments, looking searchingly at her the while. Then, apparently satisfied, he looked at the paper and read:

"Boris Paskof is responsible for the information given to the Governor of Tver which led to the visitation of November 29th. He is now in St. Petersburg, and this is to warn you to keep watch upon him, and await a favourable opportunity."

"So," she said, rising and facing him with a smile, "you can read the Nihilist cipher, therefore there may be some truth in this. Listen." Then she read from the other extract of paper:

"Michael Lobanoff, father of Stanislas Lobanoff, exiled to Siberia by administrative process, follows the calling of jeweller and merchant of gems at No. 13, Martin Street, in the west-central of London. He is believed to be an important member of the Nihilist organisation, and has received known Nihilists at his house. He is to be closely watched by the London agents. If suspicions are proved correct sufficient incriminatory matter is to be deposited on his premises to secure his extradition, on a charge of forging one hundred rouble notes on the Imperial Bank. Edward Smithson, who serves in his shop, is to be trusted."

"Now what do you think of that?" she said, as she finished reading the cipher.

"I think you have come here to save me from a great danger," he said, stretching out both his hands towards her. "You have done it for the sake of Stanislas. You would save the father of the man you have loved from the same fate that he suffered."

"Yes, and I would do more than that," she said, putting her hands in his. "His blood still asks for vengeance; his murderer is still alive, and rich and honoured——"

"And your uncle!" interrupted Michael, still keeping his eyes fixed on hers.

"Yes, my uncle," she said. "But what of that? Do you suppose I cannot hate him for Stanislas' sake?"

"I see you do hate him," said Michael. "Your hate is written on your fair face and rings in your voice. I am satisfied. You have done me a service which compels me to trust you absolutely. What do you want me to do in return?"

"You are a Nihilist," she said. "I wish to be received into the Brotherhood, and I ask you to be my sponsor."

A smile moved the thin, nervous lips of the old man as he replied:

"Yes, I am what you say, and I will be your sponsor. Peter Golitzin's suspicions are correct, but they fall short of the truth. The father of one of his victims is head of the organisation in London, and that means that he is Executive Chief of the Brotherhood. You shall take the oaths within forty-eight hours, and I can promise you a high place in our councils."

"All that I can do I will do, and I think I can do much. Can you tell me now, or must I wait till I am admitted, to know, why my—why Peter Golitzin has escaped execution so long? It seems strange that you should not have exacted vengeance before this."

"It is not so easy even for me to reach the Chief of the Third Section. It would be almost as easy to reach the Tyrant himself; and more than that, my vengeance, when it falls, shall be complete. It will not be satisfied by his mere removal. He has killed my son, and by the hand of his own son I will kill him, and by no other! I cannot do that yet, but it will not be very long, I hope, before I shall be able to give the command that he will not dare to disobey. If he does, I will have his life first and then another hand—perhaps yours—shall take his father's."

While he was speaking Vera's heart stood still with wonder and a new-born horror.

"What do you mean?" she said, with white, trembling lips. "How can you make Nicholai Golitzin kill his father? Is he one of us—I mean, of you? But no, that surely is impossible."

"It was until half an hour ago, but it is not impossible now. There is no need for you to tell me that Nicholai Golitzin loves you, and has loved you all his life. You know that he would do anything to win you, and your first task when you join the Brotherhood shall be to win him over to us.

"He is anything but the brute his father is, and his real views are liberal, though he dare not show them. This is well-known to us. Widows marry again, why

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should you not marry him after he has taken the oath? The rest you can leave to me."

"What!" she said. "I must make him a Nihilist so that you may make him a parricide, and then I am to marry him. No, Michael Lobanoff, not even to avenge Stanislas would I consent to that. I would sooner kill Peter Golitzin with my own hand. I will not take the oaths."

"You must," he replied coldly. "You have gone too far to go back. One does not play with Nihilism as with a popular craze. If you wish to leave London alive you will leave it as one of us, and, once one of us, you will learn to obey orders. You have come here of your own free will, you have given me your confidence and have won mine in return, and your fate is as fixed as that of Edward Smithson, who will be found dead in the Thames within a week. It is a matter of obedience or death, and you will choose obedience."

Michael Lobanoff's judgment was correct. There was no going back for Vera. She had walked into the toils open-eyed, but only then did she see in its true colours the hideous conspiracy to which the rest of her life must now be devoted. Whether she took the oaths or not, obedience or death were the only alternatives before her, and so it came to pass that she returned to Russia a Nihilist, committed soul and body to the work of the Brotherhood.

Gradually she became accustomed, now that the irrevocable step was taken, to the new conditions of her life, and reconciled herself to the prospect before her, saving only her share in the fearful crime which was to satisfy the vengeance of Michael Lobanoff. Though she could never love another man as she had loved Stanislas she was so far touched by Nicholai's long and unswerving devotion to her, and his patience in waiting until the old wound was healed, that if marry she must, then she would choose him above all other men for her husband.

So, too, she believed her uncle worthy of death. She knew he was doomed, and if the Chief had sent her the order to kill him she would have obeyed. But she shrank with unutterable horror from the task of turning his own son's hand against him, and of living as the wife of a man whose soul was stained with his father's blood.

Yet there was no way apparent out of the terrible situation that Michael Lobanoff's hate and ingenuity had created round her. If she failed to convert Nicholai, her failure would be taken as treason and disobedience, and she would either be killed or betrayed to the Government in such fashion that not even her uncle's interest could save her, and, for all she knew, where she had failed some other woman might succeed, and she would, after all, suffer for nothing.

There was nothing for it but to go on. To go back was not only useless, but inevitably fatal. So she devoted herself to her task, always hoping, even against hope, that some solution of the difficulty would present itself before the time came for the crisis which she dreaded.

Not a little to her surprise, she found, when she came to sound Nicholai on political subjects, that his real opinions were very different from those which he acted upon as the servant of the Czar. Like herself, the fearful work of the Third Section was fast sickening him, and preparing him for the choice which she must soon put before him—the choice between becoming a Nihilist and her husband, or denouncing her as a traitor to the Government.

While she was deliberating as to how she should do this, chance did it for her. One night, when her uncle was at Tsarkoe Selo in attendance on the Czar, Nicholai came unexpectedly into the private study, and found her copying a dispatch written in the cipher which was used by the Chief of the Section in communicating with his subordinates.

Nicholai knew this cipher, though he did not know his father's code, and it was impossible for him not to suspect her object in copying that dispatch.

"What are you copying that for, Vera? Do you know that that is treason, even in you?" he said sternly, pointing to the paper.

"So you have discovered me! Very well. You have only anticipated what I was going to tell you. Yes, it is treason, and I know it. I was copying the dispatch to send a translation to the Nihilist Club at Novgorod, so that they might be prepared.

"Yes, I know what you are going to say. That means that I am a Nihilist myself. So I am. Now you have caught me red-handed. Will you denounce me, or——"

"Most things are possible to a Russian woman who has learnt how to hate," replied Vera quietly.

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"Or what?"

"Or marry me," she said, as a rosy wave flowed upwards from her throat to her brow, heightening the beauty of her face until it seemed irresistible in his eyes.

As she spoke she held out her hands towards him with a gesture half-inviting, half-appealing. For a moment he stood amazed and irresolute. Then, with a swift movement, he put her hands aside, clasped her in his arms, and said, between the kisses that he rained upon her upturned face:

"Denounce you! Sooner would I go to the mines myself; besides, I believe I am half a Nihilist at heart myself. "So I will marry you, Batiushkla!"

"But if you marry me you must not be half a Nihilist," she said, stealing her arm up round his neck. "You must be a whole one, as I am, for I have devoted my soul and my life to the cause of Freedom, and you must do the same, or do your duty to the Czar and send me to the mines."

"If you go to the mines I will go too," he said, kissing her again. "But before that we will be married."

And so it came about that the son of the Chief of the Third Section joined that society of conspirators which, for a quarter of a century, has never been without its representatives in the immediate neighbourhood of the Russian throne.

Nicholai's father received the news of their betrothal with the highest pleasure. He had been right after all in his belief that the best thing that he could do with her student-lover was to send him to his death. She had forgotten him, and now the two families and the two fortunes would be united as he had always wished them to be.

The permission of the Czar to the union was obtained, and three months after the betrothal the wedding was celebrated in the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, Nicholai having taken the oaths which bound him to the Nihilists three days before. They went for their honeymoon to Paris, and when they had been there a fortnight the blow which Vera lived in agonising dread of fell.

One night, after they had returned from the opera, Nicholai found a man waiting to see him on urgent business. He took him into his smoking-room, and ten minutes later he rejoined his wife, carrying a little slip of paper between his thumb and finger. He was white to the lips, and his eyes were starting out of their sockets with terror.

"Look at that!" he said, in a hoarse choking whisper, as he held the paper with trembling hands before her eyes. "Look at that. My God, I see it all now! This is why you made yourself the price of my treason. Look at the name it is signed with—Michael Lobanoff, Chief of the Executive, the father of Stanislas, your lover! This is the revenge of a fiend, not of a man, and you are a fiend too, to have lent yourself to it.

"Read it: 'Peter Golitzin, Chief of the Third Section, is to be removed within one month from the date hereof, and Nicholai Golitzin is charged with the execution of this order.'

"I will not do it, I tell you! Bad as he is, he is still my father. I will kill myself before I raise my hand against him. I would kill you first, for you deserve it; but I have loved you too well, and I cannot. But if I don't, you will kill yourself, won't you? Speak!"

"Look at that!" he said in a hoarse, choking whisper, as he held the paper before her eyes. "Look at that!"

He gripped her roughly by the arm as he uttered the last word. She looked up at him with fear and horror in her eyes, strove twice to force some words between her white, parched lips, and then, with a low gasping cry, dropped senseless at his feet.

Four days after that there came a summons from St. Petersburg recalling Nicholai to his duties in consequence of a new conspiracy which had just been discovered among the students of the medical school. The evening before they set out Vera had a long *tête-à-tête* conversation with a Russian lady who was one of the bright particular stars of the foreign colony in Paris just then. She was also a member of the Paris Nihilist circle, and to her Vera told a portion of the story of the fearful situation in which her husband was placed.

"There is only one way out of it, my dear," said Countess Anna Radinsky, when she had heard the story. "Your esteemed uncle must die a natural death before the month is up. The only way to safely disobey the orders of the Chief is to make it impossible for them to be executed. You understand what I mean?"

"Yes," replied Vera, "I understand. There is no

other way, for Nicholai could not do it without being discovered, and then he would be executed, and I should be sent to the mines as a suspect, or end my days in Petropaulovski or Schlusseburg."

The result of this interview was that Vera took back with her to St. Petersburg a little packet of white, harmless-looking powder that no one save an expert could have told from pulverised chalk.

Two or three days after their arrival Princess Willewald gave a ball at her palace on the Gorokhovaya-Ulitza in honour of the home-coming of the bride and bridegroom. As their own house was not ready, in consequence of their unexpected return, General Golitzin gave them a suite of apartments in his residence.

In addition to her duties as private secretary, Vera had also been accustomed to look after her uncle's wardrobe for him, and to see that everything was ready for him to put on when he was going out to any function which necessitated full dress. One thing he was very particular about was his gloves.

He had singularly small white hands for a Russian, and he was very proud of them, and the quality and fit of his gloves was a matter of considerable solicitude. Vera, well aware of this little weakness of his, had brought him a dozen pairs of the finest white kid gloves that Paris could produce, and when he came to dress for the Princess's ball, he found a pair of these lying upon his dressing-table all ready for him to put on, skilfully stretched with the glove stretchers, and slightly dusted inside with powdered chalk, so that they might go on easily.

When they met in the hall to get into their carriage he thanked his niece for them, and told her that he had never had a pair of gloves that went on so easily or that fitted him so perfectly. The ball was a brilliant success up to a little before one in the morning, and then the festivities were brought to a sudden stop by General Golitzin fainting in the midst of a quadrille.

A doctor, who was dancing in the same set, at once examined him and pronounced the cause as affection of the heart, possibly from gout. He was taken home insensible, and towards morning was restored to consciousness. Twelve hours later he had another seizure, and after remaining in a state of coma for nearly eight hours, became conscious and gasped out feebly:

"My heart! my heart!" and died.

By the Emperor's order a post-mortem examination was made, and the physicians who conducted it were amazed to find that his heart was in a perfectly healthy condition, and showed no traces of gouty affection. The exact cause of his death was never known save to two people, and they kept each other's counsel well.

Nicholai Golitzin did not fill his father's position, as the *Grashdanin* and *Novoe Vremya* prophesied. The Emperor offered it to him, but on the plea of the terrible shock which his father's incomprehensible death had caused, both to himself and his wife, he obtained permission to decline it and to travel abroad for two years.

Nicholai and Vera went straight to London and Vera made one more call at the house in Martin Street, Holborn. Her husband never knew what passed between her and the Chief, but if she had not been able to give him a piece of paper containing a formal acquittal of all negligence in regard to the order to remove General Golitzin, the world would have been startled by revelations which would have set Europe in a blaze and crippled the activity of the Nihilists for years to come. As it was Europe never knew the avalanche that was held back from falling upon it by a single woman.

THE ROMANCE OF AN ARTIFICIAL MAN.

How Amanda Perkins was Lost.

Robert Barracks was a sincere, though highly artificial man—that is to say, he was nothing of a hypocrite, in spite of the fact that he had one false eye, a wooden leg, an auburn wig, an artificial larnyx, not to mention five very handsome sets of teeth, which he wore on different occasions. The only act of deception of which Robert Barracks had ever been guilty was that he had concealed from the fair Amanda Perkins, with whom he was deeply in love, the undoubted fact that he had one eye, one leg, a head of hair, one larynx, and no end of pearly white teeth in the grave.

Barracks had met Miss Perkins exclusively by moonlight, proposed by moonlight, and had been accepted by moonlight. Amanda firmly believed that her Robert was a perfect specimen of mature manhood, and Barracks had permitted her so to believe, rather than confess that a respectable minority of his being was dead and buried.

Alas for trusting woman and deceitful man, murder will out! It happened early in September last that Barracks had laid in a winter supply of legs, eyes, teeth, and locks and was fully prepared for the exigencies of life for one year to come, at the very least, and felt ready to call upon the fair object of his affections, and by the soft light of the flickering log to ask Miss Perkins to "name the day." "I will drop Amanda a line," quoth he, "and tell her to expect me this evening at 9.30."

And he sat down and wrote Amanda to that effect, addressed the envelope, sealed it, and posted it. As nine o'clock struck Robert dressed for his call, and precisely at 9.30 he rung the bell of Miss Perkins' house.

"Miss Perkins is not in," said the answering flunkey, "but she requested me to hand you this note."

"Thanks," said Robert, tearing the envelope from the note and reading, half aloud and half to himself:

"Robert Barracks Esq.

Dear Sir—All is over between us. I find you are false—false to the world, false to me. Do not try to see me more. I can never be yours.

Amanda Perkins.

Inclosed please find proofs of your falseness.—A.P."

With a mad sob Robert Barracks dashed down the steps, and, rushing to his apartments as fast as his artificial leg would permit, threw himself upon his bed.

"I am lost!" he whispered hoarsely; for before him were the proofs which Amanda had inclosed. They were in this form:

July 1, 1901.

Robert Barracks, Esq.

To the Universal Furnishing Co. Dr.

June 1.	One false leg, mahogany, nickel knee, decorated calf	£ 5
„	One gross blue eyes, variegated pupils, agate finish	10
„	Repairing knee-pan on rosewood limb, two new toes, and alteration of instep	2
June 5.	Three sets pearl-finish teeth, full jewelled ...	15
„	Four heads of auburn hair	10
„	Repairs to larynx	1
	Total	£43

Poor Robert! He had been guilty of that fatal error, of mixing up his love letters and his bills payable.

M. Y.

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Entertaining the Minister.

"THERE'S a go!" muttered John Sanscript under his breath, last Saturday, as he poked up the fire in the parlour grate. "There's a go! The wife has gone and invited her minister to dine, and I'm to entertain him when he comes while she dishes up.

"Now I ain't used to clergymen, and no doubt I'll make a mess of it. Still, I'm not so ignorant after all. It's been a long while since I went to Sunday School, but I recollect some of the things we learnt. There goes the bell. I'll bet that's him."

Sanscript cleared his throat, walked into the hall, and opened the door.

A pale, cadaverous-looking young man with long hair, watery eyes, high cheek-bones, large mouth, Roman nose, and clad in a suit of shiny black, bowed and smiled at the master of the house most benignly. Under his arm he carried a large book, and Sanscript, of course, knew what that was. Grasping the visitor by the hand, John pulled him into the hall with cordial intent, and, continuing to shake and squeeze, said:

"My dear, sir, this is indeed a pleasure. We've been expecting you. Come into the parlour."

With bewilderment written all over his face, the young man tacitly followed.

"Have a chair by the fire. Give me your hat. Mrs. Sanscript is dishing up the dinner now. I smell it—don't you?"

The young man sniffed the air, and his face lighted up with a hungry and expectant expression.

"That most prominent odour—the one nearest you—is the stuffin' for the duck. You like stuffed ducks, don't you?"

"I'm very fond of duck," ventured the young man.

"That's good. I thought you liked stuffed duck."

The young man smiled and nodded, which added confidence to the host's assurance.

"Had we better not transact a little business before dinner, Mr. Sanscript?"

"Oh, ah, certainly! to be sure. How stupid of me, now. I never thought about it that you always have prayers first."

"Excuse me," stammered the young man, as he flushed up with a wild dazed sort of look. "Excuse me, sir, but I never said prayers, except on Sundays and when I get up and go to bed, in my life!"

"What!—never said—— Eh, you're joking!"

"Upon my word, I'm not—much as I'm ashamed to own it."

Sanscript stroked his chin, and struggled hard to collect his scattered thoughts, and mentally observed:

"Well, here's a queer parson!"

"I thought, perhaps, you'd like to subscribe," mildly continued the young man.

"Subscribe! Oh, yes, to be sure! Why, certainly!" Then, to himself—"The mercenary villain! He attacks me for the heathen before we sit down to dine."

Then, aloud: "This is for the heathen, I suppose?"

"I don't exactly catch your meaning."

"For the missionary fund, I suppose?"

"What missionary fund?"

"How should I know? You ought to know?"

"Perhaps; but will you subscribe?"

"Why, certainly. How much is it?"

"Ten shillings."

Sanscript went down into his pocket, produced the money, and passed it over.

"Thank you," smiled the young man, ramming the cash into his pocket.

"When shall I deliver the book?"

"What book?"

It was Sanscript's turn now to be puzzled.

"Why, the 'Meandering Muleteers; or, the Mystery of the Murdered Man.'"

A light seemed breaking into Sanscript's mind. He grasped the poker, and hoarsely whispered:

"Young man, who are you? What are you?"

The visitor took the precaution to rise and slide near the door before he answered:

"The canvasser for this book under my arm, the——"

"And you are not a parson?"

"No, sir."

"Well, I'm——"

There was a rush, a scurry of feet, the opening of a door, a dull thud as if leather and flesh had come together, and two men went tumbling down the front steps to the pavement, and Sanscript *wasn't* one of them. The canvasser's exit was so violent and sudden that a man coming up the steps at that moment had not time to get out of the way. Both went rattling down together. The new visitor picked himself up and looked after the canvasser, who was limping away as fast as exhausted nature could carry him. Finally, visitor number two cautiously ascended the steps, ducking and dodging as if expecting some infernal machine to be sprung upon him at every step. He rang the bell.

Sanscript again came to the door. "Well, sir?"

The visitor fairly jumped from the ground in affright.

"Is this where Mr. Sancript lives?" he asked.

"What if it is? What do you want?"

"Softly, softly, brother Sanscript. The good book says——"

"Oh, you're a book canvasser too, are you? Well, I'll jolly soon settle you."

Away went visitor number two after the manner of visitor number one. As he slid off the top of Sanscript's right boot, the horrified voice of Mrs. Sanscript arose in an excited key from the doorway: "John, John, what have you done? Is that the way you treat my minister?"

Let us draw the veil.

CHARLES ANSON.

No. VI.—THE HOLE IN THE FLOOR.

MR. ROGER HALLY was the senior partner in the firm of Hally and Co., of East London.

They manufactured on a large scale a certain comestible largely consumed at the present day—the secret of the manufacture of which they alone possessed.

Many could, and did, manufacture crude imitations, but for excellence and quality none could approach the high standard of the article produced by Hally and Co.'s own special process.

None could successfully compete with them, none hope to wrest from their hands their position at the head of that particular industry.

Yet Roger Hally was not happy.

As he entered Edward Farrell's laboratory a look of intense anxiety was upon his face.

He had written asking for an interview with Edward Farrell, and was now there in fulfilment of the appointment made.

Edward Farrell looked up from the combustion furnace at which he was working as Roger Hally entered.

"Good morning!—Mr. Hally, I presume?" said he, rising, "If you will just excuse me for about five minutes until I have finished off this combustion, I shall be pleased to attend to you."

Roger Hally watched the deft manner in which Edward Farrell manipulated his apparatus, and could not help admiring the skill he showed.

He treated his apparatus as if it were a tender and well-loved child, a touch here, a stopper there, a piece of tube to be shifted somewhere else, all so gently and tenderly, and withal so skilfully, that the most casual observer could see that he loved his work.

Roger Hally had chemists of his own at his works, but he saw with regret that none worked like Farrell.

Perhaps that was the secret of Farrell's success.

The combustion finished, Farrell turned to his visitor.

"Now, Mr. Hally, I am at your service. What can I do for you?"

Roger Hally settled himself with an effort before replying, evidently his visit was the outcome of necessity rather than of choice.

"You may wonder," said he, "why, having a staff of chemists of my own, I find it necessary to trouble you.

"I will try and explain.

"You know the article for which our firm is so well famed—and are doubtless aware that we owe the excellence of our production to the special secret process we use in its manufacture.

"It is a somewhat complicated process, and necessitates a certain amount of chemical supervision.

"We have a trained staff of chemists whose duty it is to superintend the manufacture, and to test the finished product.

"In this way we have managed to keep up the quality of our output to a high standard of excellence, and thus have built up a reputation and a connection that is world-wide.

"Now, suddenly, ruin seems to stare us in the face.

"Try as we will, we seem to be absolutely unable to turn out the same uniform quality of article as before.

"At least every other batch is spoilt—spoilt mysteriously and completely.

"All my chemists have tried to locate the cause, but without success.

"I have offered them large rewards if they will only solve the mystery, but a mystery it still remains; and in the meantime my whole trade is being ruined, I cannot supply my customers, and thousands of pounds' worth of materials are being emptied down the drain.

"The worry of it all is beginning to tell upon me, and yet, anxious as I am, I can do nothing.

"I heard from a friend of mine about some of the mysteries you have been instrumental in solving, and I resolved, as a last resource, to consult you.

"I want you to come down to the works and investigate the whole matter if you will, Mr. Farrell," and Roger Hally looked expectantly towards Farrell, who was sitting opposite him, apparently lost in deep thought.

He roused himself as Hally finished speaking. "Certainly I will come," he said, "and with pleasure.

"Your story interests me greatly, and," continued he with a smile, "as my profession teaches me that every effect, however strange and mysterious, has a cause, I do not doubt but that we shall be able eventually to run to earth the particular cause that is producing such disastrous effects with you.

"Now I should be pleased to hear a few more of the details—Do you get every batch spoilt?"

"No!" replied Hally, with a more hopeful look on his face, as he heard Farrell's confident tone, "that is the strange part about it—all are treated in exactly the same way, yet some batches come out as right as possible, and others are completely spoilt. It is the strange uncertainty of it all that is so unsatisfactory and annoying.

"Why should they come out right sometimes and wrong at others? That's what I fail to understand.

"My chemists tell me that it must be some obscure chemical process that sometimes finds the conditions favourable, and so spreads through the whole batch—

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but at other times, owing to some unfavourable condition, is unable to spread and spoil. All very fine, I tell them, like most of their fine theories—but it is most probably just a cover for their ignorance.

"I don't want their fine theories"—and Roger Hally, in his excitement banged the bench with his clenched fist—"I don't want them, I tell you—I want them to *do* something—I want them to turn out every batch *right*."

Farrell smiled quietly at his vehemence.

"Have you been able to find out at what stage in the process the change takes place?" asked he.

"Yes; every time it takes place at the same point.

"We operate on quantities of about two tons, and at a certain stage it has to be left to stand for about twelve hours in a large vat that is kept at an even temperature all the time by means of a steam coil. The room in which these vats are situated is always locked as soon as the chemist in charge has left it, and is not again opened until twelve hours has elapsed, that is, unless something special has to be done.

"It is at this stage that the mysterious change takes place, and do what we will we cannot account for it.

"We have had our chemists watching it all night, and nobody and nothing goes near the vat, and yet the change takes place, and everything is spoilt.

"It is ruining us, I tell you, and unless something is done soon we shall have to stop our works.

"I would give any money to get to the bottom of the whole business," and the lines of worry deepened on his face as he spoke. Edward Farrell had listened to Hally's further account very quietly, and the thoughtful look on his face had settled down to one of deep concentration.

He roused himself again as Hally stopped. "Let us get down to the works again as soon as we can," he said, "this bids fair to be interesting, and if there is an explanation to this mystery, I won't leave you till it is forthcoming."

Roger Hally thanked Farrell for his interest, and felt more hopeful as he saw the confident look of power in Farrell's thoughtful eyes.

"I find it best," said Farrell, "when I am searching for anything, not to let everyone know it, so perhaps it would be as well if you took me to see the works quite as a friend—without any reference to the real object of my visit.

"It may be an unnecessary precaution, but it is better to be sure than sorry.

"Now, if you will excuse me for about two minutes I shall then be quite at your service."

* * * *

The works of Messrs. Hally and Co. were situated in the extreme east of London, near one of the large London docks. There was an air of solid money-making prosperity about the black, smoke-begrimed exterior of the buildings.

Three large square blocks, standing on the bank of the Thames, in the midst of a spacious yard, reared themselves as a monument to the industry of Roger Hally.

Busy cranes, puffing engines, heavily-laden waggons, all told of the vast business that had been built up, yet all this was in danger of being lost, all was tottering on the verge of ruin.

Farrell, as he arrived at the gates in Hally's hansom, could keenly appreciate the anxiety and wearing apprehension that such a possibility of ruin must occasion.

Roger Hally conducted Farrell to his private room, introducing him to his manager and assistant-manager on the way.

The manager, Farrell instinctively liked. He had the fine open face of a true gentleman, but the assistant-manager he just as instinctively disliked.

The little mean face, and the shifty eyes were not ones likely to inspire confidence, yet there was a look of cleverness about the man that would have commanded respect for him as an enemy.

He had all the makings of a clever rogue in his face.

Roger Hally explained to Farrell that the manager had been recently appointed, much to the disgust of

"I want you to come down to the works and investigate the whole matter if you will, Mr. Farrell."

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the assistant, who had hoped to be promoted when the old manager left.

"We had the works to consider, however," said Hally, "and we felt that Clare—the assistant—was not competent to undertake the higher duties. He is a clever chemist, but he lacks power over the men, and he is not a good organiser. But what do you say, shall we take a walk over the works now, then you can think things over a bit?"

Farrell agreed that it would be well, and together Hally and he set out to inspect the works.

Everything was in splendid condition—Hally believed in keeping his works up to a high state of efficiency—and did not let them run to ruin from any false sense of economy.

Past long lines of boilers, through mazes of machinery, past beautifully kept copper vacuum pans they went Up into large rooms, stifling with moist heat, and past swiftly-spinning centrifugal machines.

Farrell could not but admire the skilful designing of it all, and could tell the long years of patient toil that had served to build up such a smoothly working plant.

Hally led the way into one room somewhat smaller than the others.

Two large cast-iron pans or vats occupied most of the space.

"This," said he, "is the room where all the trouble and mystery appears to originate."

"We only use one vat at a time, and at present we are using that," pointing to the nearer of the two. "It contains a batch that was spoilt last night, and it will all have to be thrown away."

Farrell went to the edge of the vat and looked in.

"May I take a sample?" he asked.

"Certainly! And if you would like to test it, the chemists will all be at lunch just now so that you can have their laboratory to yourself."

"That's splendid!" Farrell replied.

He took the sample to the laboratory and tested it and compared it with the unspoilt samples that Hally had supplied him with.

He was deep in thought for a long time. An amused look had spread over his face towards the end of his examination.

"I don't wonder your chemists were a bit puzzled," said he, "yet it is very simple after all."

"You don't mean to say you have found out all about it?" cried Hally excitedly.

"Not quite that," said Farrell, "but enough to be able to tell you that it won't occur again after to-night. There's some trickery at the bottom of it, I can tell you that much."

"*Trickery!*" almost shouted Hally. "Trickery! — here! Who would be so mean?"

"That I can't tell you," said Farrell, "but we'll find out to-night. Come with me."

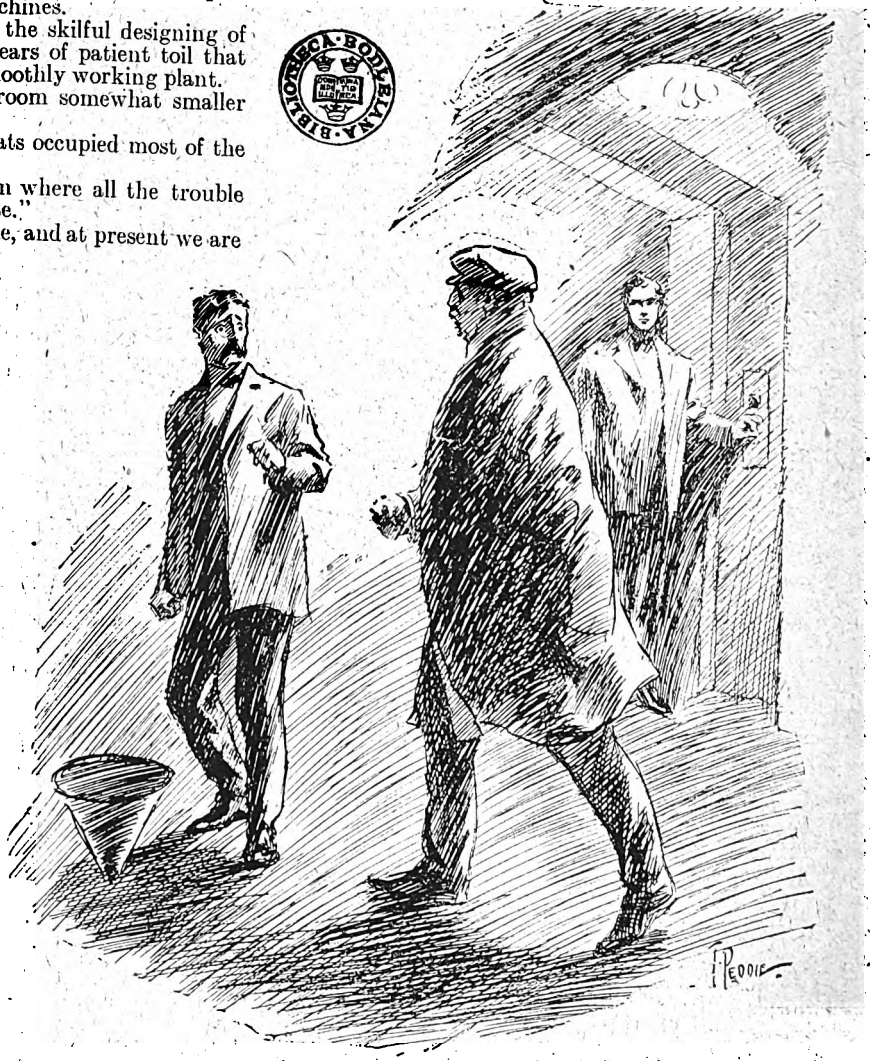
Farrell took Hally to the vat room again, and began to examine closely all round, over, and under the vats.

At first he seemed unable to see what he wanted. Hally wondered what he could be looking for. After a few minutes search, however, Farrell espied a hole about an inch in diameter in the iron floor above, but so concealed behind the steam-pipe that led into the vat that from the front of the vat it was invisible.

He seized Hally's arm and pointed to the hole.

"That's the secret," said he, almost in a whisper. "Now take me to the floor above, quick."

Hally was bewildered. Was Farrell mad? What had a hole in the floor above to do with the spoiling of his trade?



"You are the sneak, the traitor that has betrayed your master and your fellow men," said Hally, and he made as though he would strike him.

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He couldn't understand it at all, but he led Farrell to the floor above.

Farrell noted the position of the hole from above, and started to look round the place in search of something.

In all the corners, all the most secret and hidden places he looked, and at last his search was rewarded. He gave a shout of joy, beckoned Hally to him, and pointed behind some casks in the corner of the room.

Hally looked, expecting to see goodness knows what, but all that met his eye was an iron tube about seven feet long, ending in a funnel.

"Don't you see through it all now?" asked Farrell. Hally shook his head.

"You will to-night, then, I think. Can you have a fresh batch run into the vat below for to-night? If so we will come up here and watch."

Hally promised with a wondering face to arrange it.

"Now come on down and don't speak of this; we may be watched for all we know."

* * * * *

As darkness fell upon the works, Farrell and Hally crept unobserved to the floor above the vats.

Farrell chose a position in one corner where they could both see all that happened on the floor, without being themselves observed. They made themselves as comfortable as possible, for they could not tell but that they might have to wait for hours.

It seemed likely that they would, too, for at least two hours passed before anything unusual happened.

Hally, knowing not for what he was waiting, began to feel impatient, but dared utter no word.

The whole room was filled with a dim light from the open crane door, with the exception of the corner in which the two men were crouching.

The doorway looked out upon the half-dark night world spread out below; it was guarded by an iron bar, and the chain of the crane ran like a thin, shadowy spider's web to the ground.

All at once the chain began to rise slowly—very slowly.

Somebody was using the crane.

What could it mean at that time of night?

Up—up it came, almost at a snail's pace, then slowly they saw the form of a man swing into sight.

As he came opposite their doorway, with a dexterous spring he landed on the little platform outside the iron bar, lifted the bar, then lowered the crane to the ground again, and crept cautiously into the room.

It was too dark to distinguish who it was, but they could dimly see his movements as he crept about.

First he went to the hole in the floor and peeped down.

Then he crept to the iron tube with the funnel end.

This he slowly and quietly, so quietly, inserted into the hole, and lowered it into the vat beneath.

Next from under his coat he took what looked to be a fairly large earthenware bottle, and was just proceeding to pour its contents down the funnel, when he dropped the whole lot with a crash, and sprang to his feet with a look of horror.

The whole chamber had suddenly filled with a blaze of light.

Farrell had switched on the electric light. The frightened wretch saw before him, in proportions magnified by the sudden and unexpected light, the accusing forms of Hally and Farrell.

They, too, saw with amazement that their mysterious visitor—the clever sneak who had tried to ruin his employer's business—was none other than the assistant manager, Clare.

Before anyone could speak he rushed towards the crane as though to escape, but Farrell, with a quick bound barred the way. With a terrified look Clare turned away, only to confront his master, who was now beginning to recover himself somewhat.

"So," began Hally, as the terrified wretch cringed before him, "this is the secret of our trouble, is it? You are the sneak, the traitor, that has betrayed your master and your fellow men," and in his excitement he made as though he would strike him. With an effort he mastered himself, however.

"No," said he bitterly, "I won't waste my strength on you. Go, while I can keep my hands still. For your wife and children's sakes, I will spare you, but I never wish to set eyes on you again." Then, as the guilty wretch still cringed before him, "Go!" he shouted, with a stamp of his foot. "Go! before I repent my leniency."

Without uttering a word, but with lips that moved in gibberings of rage and fear, the man crept like a beaten cur from the presence of his master.

Out from the blaze of light he passed, into the darkness of the night, and was seen no more.

* * * * *

"Oh, no—it's not so wonderful as you think," said Farrell, as Roger Hally and he were talking it over later, "it's only a case of reasoning it out. How did I come to my conclusions so quickly? Well, don't you see? There were the two samples, one spoilt, the other all right. I found a certain change had taken place, and I knew there was only one thing that would cause it. You didn't put that thing in, then somebody else did, and secretly—see? When I examined the place and found the hole and the funnel tube, I could see the whole plot. Simple, isn't it?

"Eh? His motive? Well, I should judge from what you told me, jealousy—upset at not being appointed manager. A cigar? Thanks! You have found out my weakness, I see."

Philip Moon.

ENGAGED GIRLS!

It is always interesting to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed. If you want to know what sort of a person you are, send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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THE CHILD DEBUTANTE.

The Story of a Short-Lived Triumph.

SURELY no child ever gave greater promise than Lizzie Verner of developing into a bright and clever woman. Though little more than six years old, she was "as bright as a button and as sharp as a needle," to use her grandmother's words; she was quick and wonderfully observant, a faculty which her father's mother delighted to cultivate.

Lizzie was a child of the stage; she breathed the air of the profession from the moment of her birth. Her father and mother were members of the Royalty company and had been so for years; in former days they had played the hero and heroine of the melodrama so often that stage love had become real affection, and they had entered the bonds of matrimony. Emily Verner had not given up her profession; the audiences would have missed her terribly, for she had won their favour to as great a degree as her husband had done; so they continued to play the leading parts in the old plays and the new productions, and added to the laurels that had already fallen to their share in the old town.

Jack Verner's mother lived with them and took care of Lizzie, for her father and mother had but little time to spare for her. They were far too tired to rise early in the morning, and too busy during the day with the rehearsal of old parts and the learning of new ones to give her much attention. In those days, and in that town, a play did not have a long run; the patrons of the Royalty liked change. Old favourites were revived from time to time and were welcomed, but quick change was the watchword, and rehearsals were frequent.

Many a time had Lizzie been lulled to sleep by the soothing murmur of love passages heard through the thin partition of the two rooms; and quite as often had she been aroused from a refreshing afternoon sleep by a vehement denunciation by one or the other of the villain of the piece.

So absorbed were the parents in their work that they did not see the child's good qualities as clearly as grandmother, who croned over her, fondled her, and bestowed upon her all the love of which her old heart was capable.

But when she was six Jack and Emily began to notice the child's intelligence. She could repeat rhymes of considerable length with surprising accuracy; she knew the names of quite a number of garden flowers, and was possessed of knowledge beyond her years.

"If she had playmates of her own age," said the grandmother, "she would be different."

"But I don't want her to be different," remarked Jack, one day when his mother had thus commented on the reason of the child's precocity. "We want her as she is, don't we, Em? That girl will make a first-class leading lady one of these days. I wish we could bring her in for a child's part, somehow."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed granny testily. "Let the child be a child; she will be a woman, with all a woman's work, fast enough."

"But, if what you have told us is the correct explanation, you have been making a woman of her for a long time, mother," laughed Jack. And Emily smiled, as though agreeing partly with each of them.

"Yes," said Jack, in a determined tone about a week later, "we must work Lizzie in for some child's part at the Royalty. I'll have a chat with Bonner. He'll have to be getting up a new piece soon, and I'll see if he can get in some lines for Lizzie. I have no doubt we can arrange it with the manager, and I'm sure it would fetch the audience. Why, the gallery and pit would be frantic, and we should get the boxes and stalls, too, if it were well done!"

Grandmother held her peace, but in her heart she hoped that the scheme would fall through. Jack had told her laughingly that her objection was nothing but jealousy at somebody else taking the child in hand; but she knew better.

"Do it?" repeated Bonner, when he was informed by Jack of his desire that Lizzie should have a part. "Why, you come like an angel to solve a problem that has been worrying me for a week! I've got a splendid idea for a short piece, but I've been dubious about it because I want a clever youngster. Going on for seven, eh? How time flies! Should have said she was three, if I'd been asked. Just the very thing! You must let me see her, so that I can fit it in, you know."

Bonner saw the child and was delighted. His difficulty was removed, and he could go on with the writing of the play.

The scene of the drama was in Spain at the time of the Peninsula War. Jack was to be an old soldier—a corporal—and the idea was that the general in command of that wing of our troops was to place his little girl in the charge of the corporal during an attack on a position occupied by the enemy. The corporal bewails his hard luck at having to act as nurse instead of joining his comrades in the fight.

The soldiers depart, and the corporal hoists the little one on his knapsack and, after a while, steals off in the same direction to catch a glimpse of the battle.

He is standing near some trees, unseen, as he thinks, when some of the enemy, who have endeavoured to make a flank movement, open fire upon him in the belief that the glitter of the bayonet betokens the presence of a company. The bullets whizz about him and the child, scattering the leaves and tearing off the bark. The old soldier ought to withdraw to a place of safety on account of the general's daughter, but his fighting instincts get the better of him, and, with the girl still on his knapsack, he puts his musket to his shoulder and fires back.

The child screams with delight at the rattle of musketry and claps her hands; this continues till a company of British troops comes to the rescue of the fighting corporal. Just then the general is brought back mortally wounded,

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and, in an affecting scene, he commends his child to the care of the old soldier, and dies.

The plot of the piece was not exactly logical, but the patrons of the Royalty were not hard to please in the matter of plot; what they required was plenty of go and sentiment, and *The Old Soldier* was the sort of thing to bring down the house. The manager was greatly pleased, and when he had heard Lizzie repeat a few of her "lines," he engaged her for the run of the play.

Rehearsals began, and Lizzie came fully up to expectations as Marian, the general's daughter; she knew her lines thoroughly, and scarcely ever required her father's promptings to catch her cues. There was a chance that she might be frightened by the firing, but her father did his best to prepare her for this, and, of course, she would be with him. But in the rehearsals, in which the firing was purposely introduced as a test, she behaved admirably, appearing really to enjoy it, and all fears were allayed.

Jack and Emily Verner were in high spirits and intensely proud of Lizzie. They dreamt of a brilliant future for her, and made plans as to what she should do for years to come.

"It isn't for the money she will earn," said Jack Verner to the author of the piece. "Money is always acceptable, I know, but we are not greedy. No; I'm pleased and proud because I can see a grand future for her. I can see her beginning where her mother and I leave off, so to speak, and not have to fight her way up step by step, as we have done, and then only get a little way up."

Old Mrs. Verner was the only one who was not elated; she shook her head sorrowfully when the child was taken from her for rehearsals, and she occasionally damped her son's enthusiasm by a warning observation.

"Don't you worry yourself about Lizzie, mother," he interrupted, one day, with just a show of anger. "She will be all right. I know what I am about."

And after that the loving granny could say no more.

The Old Soldier was produced, and was a tremendous success. The local papers praised the child's performance and declared that she made the drama. Both Jack and Emily were beside themselves with joy.

"I told you she would be all right!" cried Jack triumphantly to his mother. "But you would worry about her, you foolish old grandmother! Talk about mothers spoiling the children, why, it's the grannies who do that."

The old woman smiled, but it was a smile without mirth. She went to the bedroom where the little girl was sleeping, bent over her and kissed her.

"I hope you will be all right, my darling," she whispered. And a tear trickled down her cheek.

The piece had an unprecedented run; the child was the talk of the town. Everybody praised Lizzie, but only granny observed the effects of the strain. The child was becoming pale, irritable, and altogether different.

"Jack, isn't the piece to be withdrawn soon?" she asked, at last.

"Still worrying about Lizzie? Well, I don't suppose it will go much longer."

"If it doesn't stop soon, Jack, she will have to give it up. I say that she ought not to play another night: if she does you must take the consequences."

"Nothing of the sort," retorted Jack roughly. "She will go through the run now; it won't be long."

Emily was rather disturbed at the grandmother's words; she now noticed that Lizzie was pale, but she only ventured a timid remark to her husband, who quickly silenced her.

Verner appealed to the ladies of the company that evening; they were all in love with the little pet and sided with Jack. Of course she was a little pale, but that wasn't anything to worry over. She was such a dear!

The run of the play came to an end a fortnight later. The new piece was due on Saturday, but the manager had to put on a substitute for *The Old Soldier* for Thursday and Friday, as Lizzie Verner was not well enough to play. The child had no sleep on the Wednesday night, and the next day she was delirious.

A severe attack of brain fever, the doctor gravely announced; she must have the greatest care. There was no lack of care; with a look of upbraiding that cut Jack Verner to the heart, his mother took despotic charge of her darling, and devoted herself entirely and untiringly to the sufferer.

In the midst of what appeared to be a period of rest, when all were sitting still or moving slowly and softly from one place to another for fear of disturbing her, the child would rise in the bed, her eyes starting and her hands outstretched, and repeat some of the words, either of her own part or others. "The enemy! They are upon me! No, I will not turn my back to the foe, though they are a hundred to one!" "Ah! that was near, but I will pay it back!" "Hurrah, here come the boys! Drive them off!"

She would clap her hands and laugh—such a feeble clap, and so hysterical a laugh! Then, exhausted, she would fall back on the pillow.

More and more feeble became the ravings until they were reduced to a whisper, and the child could not raise her hands in the familiar gesture. With hollow eyes the grandmother watched the life-stream ebb away, and when the end came she flung herself on the bed with a bitter cry and would not be comforted.

Not a word of reproach to her son came from the old woman's lips in the days that intervened between death and burial, but Jack avoided looking straight at her, for he knew what he would see. He had sacrificed his offspring to his pride; he felt like a murderer.

They laid Lizzie to rest in the pretty churchyard: there was a large crowd and many splendid wreaths. Then they went back to the desolate home.

At night they noticed that grandmother was missing. Jack waited till a late hour for her to return, but she came not. He went out and made inquiries, but no trace of her could be found. Neither he nor Emily slept that night, and at daybreak he was out again.

They found her at last. She was lying beside the half-filled grave of her little pet, a sweet smile on her care-worn face—dead.

Grace Castles.

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IN CONFIDENCE.

Conducted by MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

Is it Love?

WHEN "SNOWDROP" and her young man, who have been going out for four years, quarrel so much that sometimes they do not speak for a month, though at times they are very fond of each other? Love, "SNOWDROP," is very like vaccination. On some people it scarcely "takes" at all, while with others they are so bad as to be quite ill. At the same time, both are inoculated. Now, love, to some people, is the usher of peace and happiness, undisturbed by a cloud, while with others, it brings in storm and fury.

❦❦❦

All is a matter of temperament. You and your young man belong to the latter category, but I do not suppose you are any the less in love with each other, so don't bother about the ethics of the matter. Just see to it that, though you may be continually having tiffs, there is no real reason for them; and your lives, though perhaps a trifle boisterous, will be none the less happy.

❦❦❦

"EDGAR" has similar doubts, though the circumstances are quite different. London has come between him and a young lady who was his sweetheart. They had been together continually until cruel Fate hurled him from the north to the south of the Metropolis, which prevented their ever seeing each other, or corresponding. The other day they met again, and, the lady being disengaged, "EDGAR" wants to know how he can place matters on the old footing. How should he go about it?

❦❦❦

I fear, "EDGAR," you cannot have been very much in love to allow such a trivial thing as London to separate you. Surely you could have met her, or written to her had you really wished to continue your courtship? Your love cannot be of a very durable quality if it is so dependent on locality. But if you really like each other, surely you will be able to resume relations of friendship without much difficulty. Why not ask her to go for a walk, or to a theatre? That will bring back reminiscences of the old days which may once more bring you together.

❦❦❦

The Other Young Man

HAS been bothering both "N. W." and "G. H." In the former case, the intervening suitor is in Australia, and "N. W." has an idea that the lady is quite as fond of him—if not fonder—as of her absent swain. Would he be justified in proposing? I think he would, just to see how the wind was blowing. You say she seems very fond of your company. Ask her how fond she is of it, and incidentally mention something about Australia. That would be a neat, diplomatic way of putting the matter before her in a nutshell.

❦❦❦

With "G. H." the "other young man" is a friend since boyhood. The awkward part of it is that both are attached to a girl who does not give either the slightest clue as to whom she likes the best. She is so unpleasantly pleasant to both that neither knows who's who in her estimation. Meanwhile, their friendship is a dead letter. Well, "G. H.," try strategy—say, the following:

❦❦❦

Just tell the other man that he has no business to trifle as he is doing. Urge him to be a man and state his case. Tell him that "faint heart never won fair lady" and other things, and finally get him to go and propose to her. Meanwhile, be very attentive and nice to her yourself, letting her know incidentally that you wish you were your friend, and lucky enough to possess her affection; that if you thought for one moment that you did, you would not hesitate to propose. Then, after he has proposed, hasten to congratulate her in a doleful manner on his supposed success. If she has accepted him, then you must give the thing up. Obviously she prefers him. But if not, then propose yourself, and settle matters once for all.

❦❦❦

Is She Heartless?

IF the handsome man whom she is about to marry is seized with a disease, and disfigured for life, and she throws him up? So writes "L. S." At bottom very, very heartless. To like a man purely for his good looks is a very debased sort of attachment. All girls who have such ideas of marriage would do well, during the present epidemic, to ask themselves if they would continue to love such a man were he disfigured for life? If not, then let them cease to think of him at all, for the test is a very real one indeed.

❦❦❦

The Motherless Girl,

WHOSE name is "CONNIE," has an aunt with whom she has been living since her mother died. "CONNIE" has a little money, which the aunt wants to be kept in the family, and wishes "CONNIE" to marry her cousin, the aunt's son, whom she does not like. Recently "CONNIE" had a proposal from a man she really cares for, and is in difficulty as to what she should do. She feels she owes her aunt a good deal, but the sacrifice of her lover seems too much to expect.

❦❦❦

It seems to me that your mother's sister has not carried out your mother's wishes; you have had a great deal to put up with since you lost your dear mother. I am always loth to counsel such a step, but you are of age now, and can marry if you wish. You are not bound to marry your cousin just because your aunt wants to get hold of the money which has come to you. Marry the man of your choice; but be quite sure that his affection is sincere.

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SAVED FROM THE LAW.

The Story of a Brother's Mercy.

CHAPTER I.

Brothers Two.

"I TELL you that I am an outcast through you!"

"Through me? You wrong me, Godwin—on my soul you do! Why! I would rather die than do you such an injury!"

"Psha! I am not a fool, Leonard! nor am I blind! You have my father's ear—the benefit of his influence—of his purse; while I—the elder—the real heir to both his money and his love, am sent adrift, so that you may reap that which of right belongs to me!"

"Well, Godwin, I will not argue it with you! You do me an injustice, which some day you will acknowledge."

"Never! never! The day that sees you and me face to face again, will see us as enemies—sworn foes!"

"At least let me explain why——"

"Explain nothing! Sufficient that you have lied to my father, and have made him cast me out, as one who has committed a great crime. For this, I will for once imitate you in that I will have no pity—no mercy!"

Leonard Axtell shrugged his shoulders in that exasperatingly deprecating way so irritating to one like his brother Godwin, whose naturally hot temper could ill brook the implied contempt and supercilious disbelief of the other.

The two, sons of an immensely wealthy coal owner on the Welsh border, were parting under somewhat peculiar circumstances.

Leonard Axtell was his father's darling. He was the younger son, but, as so often happens, the latest-born elbowed the first-born out into the open.

Old Charles Axtell's fortune was his to will to whom he would. No entail secured the interests of the eldest son. Leonard, of course, knew this, and being of a persuasive tongue, and of a pitilessly persistent nature, he played upon his father's partiality for himself for the securing of his own ends.

He was his father's right hand in everything; nothing went on, in pit, in office, or on the estate of Glaswyd, without his knowledge or consent.

Godwin, an open-hearted, open-handed young giant, just home from Cambridge, full of boating honours, bore with this for a time, but when by accident he learnt that his presence at Glaswyd was not desired, he made up his mind to throw up his prospects at the Bar, and to leave for London as a candidate for the journalistic and literary life.

But it was not altogether this which decided him, it was a certain communication made to him by one of his father's coal-hewers.

Owen Williams was not an ordinary miner; he had brains, and more, he kept them bright and unrusted. He was old and bent, but still vigorous and energetic.

"Do you know, Mr. Godwin," he said one day, "I'm a-going to break Mr. Leonard's head!"

"Break my brother's head, Owen! Why, what's he been doing?"

"Doing! What hasn't he done? He's lowered our wages! he's knocked off our free coal, and—and he's witched my little girl—my Nance!"

"Witched your daughter! You're talking riddles, man! It can't be!"

"It may seem a riddle to you, sir! but it ain't none to me. Mr. Leonard's a-making love to my Nance; and if he don't sheer off, and let her alone, I'll break his head—though he be my master's son!"

"This is true, Owen? I mean, you are sure of it?"

"Sure as I'm for night shift at six to-night! I thought, perhaps, as you could put it to him, Mr. Godwin, as it isn't right, for one like him to come buzzing round the likes of my little Nance, even if—if he does marry her, as he says he will."

"Look here, Owen, I'll speak to my brother! Meanwhile, say nothing to anybody. I am going to London to-morrow for a good long spell; but I'll try and stop this matter—if I can."

This conversation took place shortly after the one between the brothers. Godwin left the old miner with a fixed determination to stop any ill-assorted union Leonard might be contemplating.

It was in the gun-room that Godwin found his brother.

"Leonard!" he said. "I'm leaving here to-night, and shall probably never darken the doors of Glaswyd again, but I can't go without giving you a special word of warning."

"Of warning! Against what or whom? Well, do not be long about it, for the latest news with regard to my father is that he is not so well, and I wish to return to his room as soon as possible."

"My errand is quickly done! Owen Williams tells me that you are making love to his daughter Nance. Now, mark me! leave Nance alone. You would marry her of course—I give you credit for that much; but you would blight her life if you did; and, besides, old Owen declares that he will do you some personal injury in any event. He has other views for his daughter; and—and, in fact does not desire you as a husband for her."

"Godwin! I wish in turn to warn *you*. My business is my own, and no other man's—not even my elder brother's. You will have quite enough to do to manage your own affairs. Don't meddle with mine!"

"But I tell you——"

"You are too late, my dear fellow! By at least a week, for, just that time ago, Nance and I were married; and I shall do my best, both to falsify your very kind prophecy, and to take such precautions as shall effectually prevent my respected father-in-law from proceeding to undesirable extremities."

"Then I will go at once to my father and appeal to him on behalf of Owen and his daughter! The old man wants nothing—good, bad, or indifferent, to do with you, and——"

Godwin made to open the door. Before he could do so, however, a servant entered the room.

"Mr. Leonard! your father is dead!"

"Dead!" said both the young men in one breath

"Dr. Llewellyn, Mr. Leonard, had just come, but master was gone before he could get upstairs."

"Poor old dad!" said Godwin regretfully. "Well, Leonard, I shall remain in the neighbourhood till after my father is buried, and then when I am assured of my position, I will decide whether I go or stay."

CHAPTER II.

The Murder in Clanricarde Gardens, S.W.

"Tell Axtell, when he comes in, that I want him."

"He's here now, sir."

"Is he? Then send him up at once."

The editor of the *Daily Telephone* was evidently in a hurry about something.

"Ah, Axtell! anything special on?"

"No! Nothing except that company-promoting case in bankruptcy."

"Well you can turn that over to Whittaker. You've heard about this affair in Clanricarde Gardens, South Kensington, eh?"

"Yes! A lady namesake of my own—poisoned, they say!"

"I want you to get the case up; it promises to be something out of the common—sensationally considered."

"All right! Then I'll get away at once. I *want* to get ahead of the *Planet;* they always are saying that we can't touch them for smartness. This time, unless I'm very much mistaken, it will be the *Telephone* first, and the *Planet* nowhere."

"Well, do your best. All the people concerned in the thing are wealthy, and of good social position. Don't study expenses, but, if necessary, get on the trail of the husband, who, I hear, has absconded."

Godwin Axtell, Special Social Commissioner of the *Daily Telephone*, had, somehow, a curious feeling of near-at-hand strange happenings. Not that he consciously associated himself with this unhappy family in Clanricarde Gardens, for, so far as he knew, no family connection of his own lived within two hundred miles of London.

"I will at least satisfy myself as to whether these people are in any way related to me. I hope not, for I have enough trouble without the gruesome addition of this business."

Clanricarde Gardens is a semi-fashionable spot, lying midway between Chelsea and Kensington.

Civil servants of good position, retired Army and Navy officers, popular actors and singers, and the usual sprinkling of professional men, are the general type of tenants who occupy the somewhat pretentious mansions of the Gardens and the immediate neighbourhood.

No. 46 had, since midsummer, been the residence of a Mr. Martin Axtell and his wife.

The lady was good-looking, but evidently not well-bred, or over refined. She was not seen outside the house much except on fine days, in a closely-windowed brougham, being on all such occasions accompanied by her husband, a neatly turned-out fair man, of moderate height, and of about thirty years of age.

Then the wife ceased to go out, the husband going on long, lonely drives in a private hansom, and seldom returning until late at night, or the early hours of the next morning.

It was the cook who first discovered that anything was wrong. She had occasion to consult her mistress about some domestic matter, and knocked at the boudoir door about an hour after Mr. Axtell's departure.

It was not long before it was known, not only in the neighbourhood, but throughout London, that a cruel murder had been perpetrated.

Seated in her arm-chair, propped up by three or four pillows, and with her head slightly inclining to the right, sat Mrs. Axtell, in front of a huge mirror, that reflected her from head to foot.

The cook, who had entered the room after her knock, finding that Mrs. Axtell did not answer her, went closer and looked in her face.

Her mistress was quite dead!

The blueness of the lips, together with a suspicious blackness of the finger-nails, told unmistakably of death by poison.

When Godwin Axtell appeared in his journalistic capacity on the scene, he found police barriers at every point. There had, of late, been strong expressions current of both official and public opinion on the subject of newspaper detection and its methods; and the police in this instance seemed determined to place every obstacle in the way of reporters generally, and of the *Daily Telephone* representative in particular.

"See the body!" said the inspector to Godwin; "certainly not! No one gets within a mile of it if I can help it!"

"Oh, very well! Perhaps I may have my opportunity when it is taken to the mortuary."

"Which won't be till after the inquest, and not then if I have anything to say about it! A parcel of scribblers messing us about, and preventing us from doing our duty! It's scandalous—that's what it is!"

Now Godwin Axtell was not one of the easily discouraged sort, and he resolved at all hazards to turn the inspector's flank.

Policemen are but human, and when, Godwin apparently departed, the man of office retired to refresh exhausted nature, it was to leave the field in charge of the rustic wits of newly-recruited P.C. A. Z. 1001.

To the latter presently appeared the ubiquitous *Telephone* reporter.

How it was done, A. Z. 1001 to this day is unable to say. All that he does know is that half a sovereign changed hands; the rustic constable moved down the passage-way; and in two minutes or less, Godwin Axtell had returned from inside the boudoir, shutting the door quietly behind him.

There was a strange look on his face—a look only possible where the very deepest feelings of a man's nature were stirred.

It awed even A. Z. 1001, who took up his position again by the boudoir door, the corrupted incorruptible.

Passing out by the front entrance, Godwin encountered the inspector hastily returning from his furtive refresher.

"I thought you'd gone!" blurted out the latter.

"So I had," replied Godwin gravely, and yet with a certain expression of satisfied triumph about his eyes and lips. "But I changed my mind; and now I know quite sufficient to enable me to unlock the mystery—if mystery there be."

"What have you found? What do you know?"

"Something that you do not know. Something which will tell me a broader truth about this poor murdered soul, than you with all your official aids and methods will ever elicit! Good-day!"

In the woman lying upon the couch in the boudoir at No. 46, Clanricarde Gardens, Godwin Axtell recognised his brother's wife—Nance, the daughter of old Owen Williams, the coal-hewer of Glaswyn.

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CHAPTER III.

The Last Link.

Those who are familiar with Southampton, know that at the back of High Street, below Bar, there are many quaint little squares and spots, the residents in which are, to all intents and purposes, out of the world.

One of these squares, consisting of about a couple of dozen old-fashioned houses, is especially hidden away and retired, affording, as it does, every opportunity for concealment from the public eye for those who, for some good reason, desire seclusion.

On the evening of the day that saw Nance Axtell done to death in London, an old decrepit man, quite well-dressed and carrying a fair sized Gladstone bag, strolled into the inclosure, and made for a house in the right-hand corner.

There was no bill in the window, but the stranger appeared to be known to the woman who opened the door. She addressed him as Mr. Martin, and claimed him as an old acquaintance.

"I have business, Mrs. Jeyes, that will detain me in the town for three, perhaps four days. Meanwhile I am so tired with a long journey that I shall rest indoors most of the time."

To the landlady this did not seem out of the way or odd, and telling him to be sure and call for whatever he required, she left him.

On the afternoon of the second day Mr. Martin went out for an hour; an act on his part which, could he but have foreseen the consequences of it, he would assuredly have refrained from.

The object of his walk was the office of a well-known line of Atlantic steamers.

He had a curious habit of lifting his left hand to smooth back his hair; and this he did two or three times when applying and paying for a saloon passage for New York.

There was another man in the outer office, who was apparently making some inquiries of one of the clerks, a recurrence of the little mannerism of Mr. Martin's, causing him to look fixedly at him.

His business done, the old gentleman quickly left the office, the other man following as quickly in his wake.

Soon the former was conscious that he was being shadowed, and did his best to double on his pursuer.

In his anxiety to do this, he lost his clue, and, diving under an archway through into a narrow *cul-de-sac*, found himself at bay, and face to face with the other.

The second man's action was extraordinary, and, had the place been any other than a bare, three-walled court, would, inevitably, have attracted people's attention.

He made a clutch at the hair of the figure in front of him, and with a smart jerk pulling at it, brought it, together with the venerable beard, away in his hand.

"Leonard Axtell!" he said, to the bare-headed, smooth-faced young man, who stood, self-confessed, before him, cowering and darting his eyes from one side to the other, to discover a chance of escape. "In defiance of all law, and of my duty to society, I am going to let you depart and use that ticket you have just bought; but before you leave this place, where no one sees us save the God you have outraged, I have a few words to say to you."

The miserable wretch stood straighter at the implied promise of ultimate release.

"Listen!" went on Godwin Axtell, his voice more the voice of a judge condemning a criminal, than that of a brother by blood. "I know, as all the world knows now, that the first for greed, the second in the lust of cruelty incarnate, you killed your father and your wife. Do not speak, or, perhaps, I may repent that which I now do. You have forged a chain about you that will drag with you to your grave-side, and the last link of which is to-day fitted in, in completion of your work.

I cannot give you up to justice! I cannot! for the same mother bore us; but if you would escape the due reward of your deeds, you will get you to some spot, the very loneliest in God's world, and there make what peace you can with your own soul, and with Him!"

* * * * *

The little corner house in the square has lost a lodger, and a man is flying for his life from the face of his Maker. and of his kind.

Ralph Enderby.

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A Written Proposal.

What the Posting of the Wrong Letter Did.

"I WANT you to do me a favour, Rogers," said Carson, after the usual greetings and inquiries concerning each other's health. "I'll tell you what I should like you to do," he continued rapidly, as though afraid that Rogers would decline if he were allowed to speak. I'm in love—perhaps I ought not to be at thirty-five—in love with a woman who would make me happy, and who, I fancy, likes me; but I can't make love. I'm too prosaic now, so I think of writing my proposal. See? If she says 'No!' she will not witness my discomfiture, because she must answer by letter, you know. But I can't write that letter for the life of me. You may call me a big fool, if you like, but it's a fact. I want you to sketch out a letter for me, old fellow. There! Do you understand?"

Rogers' eyes wandered to the portrait of a charming maiden that stood, half-hidden, on his mantelpiece. He stifled a sigh, and said:

"I'll write a draft letter for you, Carson, if you wish. I'll do it just as I would write it for myself. Light up one of those cigars"—motioning to a box on a side table, "and amuse yourself for a minute or two while I'm busy."

Another glance at the half-hidden portrait, and Rogers turned to his writing-table. Taking up his pen, he leant back in his chair and stared thoughtfully at the wall-paper in front; after quite two minutes' reflection he bent forward over the table, with a far-away look in his eyes, and began to write.

"What do you think of this, Carson?" he demanded, when he had finished, holding out the draft proposal, as he had called it.

Carson took it and surveyed it critically.

"You've done it in style, my boy! Good handwriting, your own address, all in order. Doesn't look like a mere draft, but let's see what you have said." He began to read. "My dear Gwynne." He raised his eyes. "Her name isn't Gwynne, you know! What made you think of that uncommon name? I never——"

"Oh, that's nothing! I happen to know a young lady of that name. Never mind that!" interrupted Rogers hastily, turning to hide his confusion.

Carson was too interested in his own affair to observe the effect of his remarks. He read the letter in silence.

"I'm afraid it won't do for me, Rogers," he protested regretfully, after the second reading. "It's all right, I daresay, and I rather like the last words, those about wearing the roses if she means to say 'Yes!' Only I'd prefer to have the reply by letter, in case it isn't favourable. But the letter is too sentimental for me."

"It seems to me," said Rogers drily, "that love and marriage are matters of sentiment. I told you I would make up a letter just as *I* should write it."

"Yes," returned Carson dubiously; "but I couldn't be as poetic as that. I couldn't act up to it. I wanted a plain, matter-of-fact statement, ending up in a plain question."

"Well, perhaps you can model your letter on that, taking out the sentiment," said Rogers stiffly and illogically. "I said that that was just as I should put it, and that's wrong, because I wouldn't write a proposal! I should go to the girl and say it! I believe that the women of to-day are not much different from those of the days of chivalry, when men were bold and won the love of their dames by gallant deeds done for those whom they loved and desired to possess! A proposal by letter! No! A proposal requires the proper setting, Carson; a moonlight ramble, a row on the lake, a rustic seat in a shady nook, according to whether it takes place by night or by day. You talk and edge closer together, till—till a straggling lock of hair brushes your cheek; you kiss, and—Ah!"

"I'll think it over," said Carson, laying the draft letter on the corner of Roger's writing-table unnoticed by its author. "I'll——"

A knock at the door cut short the sentence on Carson's lips, and without waiting for the customary "Come in!" a young man entered the room breezily.

"Hallo, Blake!" cried Rogers heartily. "Glad to see you! You know Carson, of course. That's right! take a seat and give us your opinion. Suppose you were in love with a girl, what would you do, Blake?"

"Marry her!" returned the new-comer promptly.

"Oh, of course, but wouldn't you ask her first?" queried Rogers, with an amused smile.

"Certainly! I should first make sure I was in love with her, and that she had some sort of a liking for me, and then I should get her consent and have the wedding as soon as possible."

"But how would you ask her? By letter?" questioned Rogers, casting a side look at Carson, who was shifting uneasily on his chair.

"Never!" ejaculated Blake, with an emphasis that indicated experience. "A woman's 'No!' in black and white, is about the hardest thing I know. If the girl thinks something of you—mind, I'm particular on that point—tell her your sentiments, don't write them. You may win a woman by the very ardour of your proposal, and how can a letter show as much

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warmth as you can put into a speech? You want the distant notes of sweet music——"

"Yes, we discussed all that," Rogers broke in, seeing that Carson was vexed. "You two go near the window and enjoy the summer breeze and your smokes for a minute or two, while I write a note of invitation to the theatre for to-morrow night. Nearly forgot it, by jove! Ought to have sent it two days ago, but it went clean out of my head! It may be too late now."

The two visitors did as Rogers requested. Rogers dashed off the note, sealed it in an envelope and addressed it to Miss Gwynne Kingsbury.

He walked to the window, took a seat between the others, and joined in the lively conversation until the darkness of a warm day had fallen over the city. When it was quite dark, Rogers arose to light the gas, and Carson and Blake expressed their intention of leaving him alone in the glory of his bachelor rooms.

"I must be off," said Carson, consulting his watch and emitting a short whistle. "Had no idea it was so late! How deceiving these lovely evenings are."

"I'm coming, too," observed Blake, knocking a little cigar ash off his sleeve. "I'm going your way, I think. Aren't you off to see Mason? Yes; then we can walk part of the way together. You won't walk with us for a constitutional, Rogers?"

"No, thanks! Sorry you must be off. Drop in again at these bachelor diggings as soon as you can, either of you. Oh, Blake! You might post this letter, and spare me the trouble of going out. I want it to reach—er—its destination first thing in the morning. My sister and I are going to the theatre to-morrow night, and I promised I would write to—the lady, and invite her to join us. We have taken tickets, and her father is away, you know, just now. Sis would be mad if she knew I had forgotten to send the invitation, so don't you forget to post it!"

"Never fear! That will be all right," said Blake airily. And they parted.

Rogers drew the half-hidden portrait towards the edge of the mantelpiece and gazed intently at it. No wonder he was in love with the original! A more bewitching girl, blossoming into womanhood, it would have been hard to find.

"What's the good of my cherishing hopes and living in a fool's paradise?" Rogers asked bitterly. "Look at the difference in our positions! I, a struggling, poverty-stricken artist. She, the daughter of a man of wealth and of aristocratic lineage! I am poor compared with him, and I am a nobody! Perhaps I ought to keep away from her set, which I should probably never have had a chance of entering if my sister hadn't married Markham."

He pushed the photograph back into its accustomed place with a sigh.

"No, I'll enjoy her society while I can get it. That will be sweet remembrance in the future!"

(*Continued on page* 380.)

Photographed for Death.

THERE are many celebrated women living to-day who have read their own obituary notices in the public press. The sensation must be exceedingly novel, if not unpleasant, and it may be presumed that few women would care to undergo the experience twice in their lives. Equally unpleasant must be the sensation of having your last photograph taken before death. Yet Mrs. Tong, of Gordon Avenue, Woodcock Street, Hull, was photographed for death, and below is her story as she related it to a *Hull Daily News* reporter. "I owe my life to Chas. Forde's Bile Beans! Ever since I can remember I have been in bad health. After marriage I became worse. Everything my friends advised me to take in the way of medicine I took, and I have been under the care of more than one doctor in Hull. With the birth of every child my condition grew worse. Often when I have been out I have been seized with dizzy fits, and have had to grasp the railings or anything near me to prevent me from falling. I was never free from biliousness, and I was so weak that I could hardly walk. I used to be sick at the very sight of food. I have been for days at a stretch and never broken my fast, and when I did it was only a little dry toast or a biscuit that I could eat. I became wasted away until I was almost like a shadow. Some time ago I was an out-patient at the Royal Infirmary, but despite the best medical treatment, I could not get any better.

"I was very nervous, and the least thing would upset me. Indeed, I could not bear my children to play near me. I was afraid at times to be left alone with them, because I had such pain in my head, and I feared I might do them some mischief. I really thought that I should have to be removed into the asylum. One doctor suggested that I should go into the hospital to be operated on, for I felt as though I was becoming blind. My sight was obscured continuously by a mist. Liver disease was the real cause of my troubles, and one doctor told me I had something growing on my liver.

"I was also told that unless I was operated on I should only live three years. I felt, however, that my time on earth was short, and I went and sat for a photograph with my husband, so that when I was gone my friends could have some remembrance of me."

"Well! You certainly don't now look like a woman who had been at death's door," said the reporter.

"No," replied Mrs. Tong: "Perhaps I do not, but for this I have only Bile Beans to thank."

"I sent for a box about four years ago, just when I felt like dying. The first few doses seemed to have a wonderful effect upon me, so I continued to take them. You may believe me or not, but they cured me of my defective sight and made me so well again that I went out and washed clothes in order to get money to buy more. As I took the medicine my pains ceased. I got better and better until I am once again enjoying good health. I have never since been without Bile Beans in the house. I am now altogether a different woman to what I was, and not only have I given Bile Beans to my own children when they needed medicine but I have given away dozens of Bile Beans to my neighbours."

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He walked about his room restlessly for nearly an hour, and then retired to bed at what, for him, was an early hour.

Rogers was partaking of luncheon in a restaurant about two o'clock on the following afternoon, when he saw Blake threading his way among the tables towards him.

"Found you at last!" exclaimed Blake. "I say, I'm awfully sorry!"

"What's wrong?" inquired Rogers, digging his fork rather viciously into a piece of meat. "Suppose you have heard that I didn't sell that canvas to old Jackson? Well, don't know how you got the news, seeing that I only heard this morning myself, but you'll understand that I'm quite as sorry about it as you!"

"Of course!" laughed Blake. "No, I'm not sorry about that, I mean," he added, correcting himself, "it's not *that* I am sorry about especially at this moment. I forgot all about that letter of yours. Yes, I understand that I am a pretty fellow to promise such a thing! But the worst of it is—I have lost it! Can't imagine where it can have gone! But I have put the matter right for you, and I've come to explain."

"How did you put it right?" asked Rogers, feeling somewhat relieved at hearing that the invitation would not be omitted altogether.

"Well, I remembered my neglect this morning, so I chased round to your rooms to tell you. You were out, and I didn't know what to do. In my dilemma, I tried the door of your sitting-room and it opened. So I took the liberty of entering."

"Yes." Rogers uttered the monosyllable impatiently.

"I went to your writing-table with the idea of scribbling a note of explanation and apology in case you came in while I was hunting for you, and I saw the copy of the invitation on the corner of the table. It was lucky that you took a copy, Rogers; I didn't give you credit for being so careful. So I put that in an envelope and addressed it to her, and sent it by special messenger."

"Copy? Copy of what?" gasped Rogers, in bewilderment.

"Copy of the invitation to the play, of course!" retorted Blake, with a show of irritation at the other's dulness. "I saw that the letter began, 'My dear Gwynne,' and had yesterday's date. I knew that the letter you gave me was for Miss Gwynne Kingsbury. So there you are. You're a bit dull this morning. Disappointment, I expect."

Rogers stood up, his face pale with anxiety, and kicked his chair aside.

"You really posted that letter to her?"

"Yes."

Roger's countenance became ghastly.

"Then you have ruined me, Blake. It was not a copy! Why, that stupid Carson must have left it there! Blake, that letter was never intended for *her*. It was for——"

Blake did not hear the last word, which was "Carson," and he could only gaze in amazement at Rogers as the latter seized his hat and rushed from the restaurant.

"Now, whoever would have thought that he was carrying on with two girls at the same time?" asked Blake of nobody. "And both named Gwynne, too! That's the extraordinary part of it! Poor beggar, I'm sorry I've got him into a mess, but he ought to have acted on the square!"

Rogers' brain was in a whirl as he strode homeward. That draft of a proposal of marriage, which he had written for Carson, had been left on his table by that individual, and had been posted to Gwynne by that idiot Blake! Rogers walked homewards without being aware of it, pondering on the result of the mishap. On his table he saw the note from Blake, who, after finding the supposed copy, had added these words: "It's all right; I have found the copy and sent it off, and, as an atonement, I will send a bouquet of the best roses I can find, along with the letter."

"That settles it," groaned Rogers. "That bouquet fits in with that line about wearing roses if the answer is favourable."

He sat for a good hour without moving; when he got up there was a set expression on his countenance that indicated resolution to perform an awkward task.

"I may as well go there and make an apology before she gets someone to come here and horsewhip me! That's the most gentlemanly thing to do. I shall be out of her good graces in the future, but it can't be helped. The next time Carson wants to marry a girl, he can marry her himself. I mean, he can write his own proposals. And as to Blake, I'd like to—to——"

He could not think of a punishment dreadful enough for "that idiot," so he left the sentence unfinished, and began to make his toilette for a visit to Miss Kingsbury.

He was particular about his dress. He had a delicate mission to perform, and he would have more chance of gaining pardon for his offence if he presented a good appearance. Perhaps he would not be permitted to enter? That was probable enough, but he would try.

During the short journey to Miss Kingsbury's home Rogers revolved in his mind the phrases he had penned in that memorable letter; the endearing terms, the expressions of hope that she would listen to his suit; his vows to make her happy if she would intrust her future to him—they all came back to him with a vividness that made him hesitate to carry out his resolution to face the consequences of the blunder.

"It's consummate impudence for me to aspire to her hand, and it was an unpardonable breach of good manners to have associated her with a sample offer of marriage! I don't suppose she will condescend to see me, but I may as well try."

His ring was answered, and he was shown into the reception room, while his card was taken to Miss Kingsbury. So far good; she would see him.

He waited anxiously for her appearance, and endeavoured to gain composure by turning his back to the door and looking through the window. He became so absorbed in his anxious thoughts that he did not hear the door softly open, and was only aroused by a rustle quite close to him. Wheeling round hurriedly, he found himself confronted by a vision of exceeding loveliness in the person of Gwynne Kingsbury.

Where was the haughty, angry expression which he had expected? In its stead he saw a light of welcome in her eyes, an enchanting flush on her cheeks, and a smile on her lips. In her waistband was a bunch of roses.

The truth burst on him all at once. The written proposal had been accepted, and the roses meant "Yes!"

Forgetting all restraint, he went towards her with outstretched arms, and a moment later she was folded in her lover's embrace.

The engagement received the approval of Mr. Kingsbury on his return; his daughter's happiness was his first consideration. Blake received a handsome meerschaum for his share in the affair, and now wishes that he could make as lucky a blunder on his own account.

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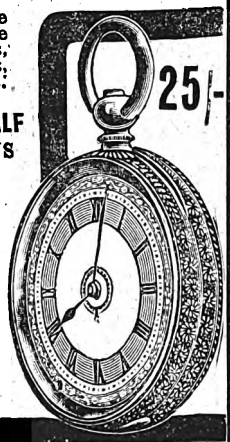

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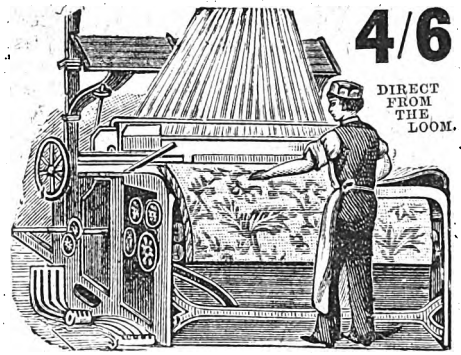

4/6 DIRECT FROM THE LOOM.

To readers of SHORT STORIES, 22/3/1902. On receipt of Postal Order or stamps value 4/6 (Regd.), we will send you the **Largest Genuine Reversible Carpet in Brussels Finish, with Rug,** ever sold at the Price, direct from the Looms to any address on receipt of amount. Suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, &c., bordered and woven in Brussels Patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember, these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.

SPECIAL OFFER.—2 CARPETS AND 2 RUGS, 8s.

THE PRUDENTIAL BRUSSELETTE CARPETS

Admittedly the Marvel of the Age.

Woven and Reversible, rich Brussels and Turkey Patterns and Colourings, superior quality, with handsome Border to match. A Marvel of Excellence and Beauty. These Carpets are superb imitations of real Brussels, and except by the closest scrutiny, the difference cannot be detected.

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6 ft. by 6 ft.	2/11 each.	9 ft. by 10½ft.	8/6 each.	12 ft. by 13½ft.	14/6 each.
6 ft. by 7½ft.	3/11 ,,	9 ft. by 12 ft.	9/6 ,,	12 ft. by 15 ft.	15/9 ,,
6 ft. by 9 ft.	4/9 ,,	10½ft. by 12 ft.	11/6 ,,	12 ft. by 18 ft.	19/6 ,,
7½ft. by 9 ft.	5/11 ,,	9 ft. by 15 ft.	12/6 ,,	12 ft. by 21 ft.	22/6 ,,
9 ft. by 9 ft.	7/6 ,,	12 ft. by 12 ft.	12/9 ,,		

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

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The Queen's Royal.

HEARTH-RUGS

(Registered). 3ft. by 2ft. each. **2/-** Postage, 6d. extra.

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Gigantic Sale of the "Queen's Royal" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern.

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6 ft. by 6 ft.	4/11	9 ft. by 13½ft.	16/6
6 ft. by 7½ft.	6/-	10½ft. by 12 ft.	18/-
6 ft. by 9 ft.	7/6	9 ft. by 15 ft.	19/6
8 ft. by 9 ft.	9/-	12 ft. by 12 ft.	21/-
6 ft. by 12 ft.	10/6	12 ft. by 13½ft.	22/-
9 ft. by 9 ft.	11/-	12 ft. by 15 ft.	25/6
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4½ft. by 7 ft.	11/-	9 ft. by 12 ft.	38/-
6 ft. by 9 ft.	16/-	11 ft. by 12 ft.	47/-
7½ft. by 9 ft.	23/-	12 ft. by 13½ft.	59/-
9 ft. by 9 ft.	28/-	12 ft. by 16 ft.	69/-
9 ft. by 10½ft.	33/-	12 ft. by 18 ft.	77/-

Velvet Pile Brussels Carpet Squares.

Also **Rich Velvet Pile Stair Carpets**, bordered to match, 18in. wide, 1/8 per yard; 22½in. wide, 2/- per yard; 27in. wide 2/3 per yard.

Rich Velvet Pile

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2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS **2½%**

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MEAD CYCLE CO. Chicago, U. S. A.

1/-

1,000 GOLD WATCHES FREE!

To introduce "Volosci," the great hair renewer, to 1,000 more readers of this paper, we have decided to give away 1,000 GOLD WATCHES ABSOLUTELY FREE of COST. These Watches are REAL GOLD GOVERNMENT HALL-MARKED, very handsome, excellent movement, and reliable time-keepers. If you want one, write to us immediately. With your letter send us 1s. postal order, for which we will send you "Volosci," and our offer, on complying with which the GOLD WATCH will be sent FREE by registered post. "Volosci" is invaluable for the growth of the moustache and the beard, a true hair restorer, keeps the scalp clean and free from dandruff, scurf, etc. Our idea for giving away the GOLD WATCHES FREE is that you may talk about "Volosci" to your friends, and recommend it to them wherever possible.—THE VOLOSCI COMPANY (Dept. 70), 279 City Road, London, E.C.

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The Coveted Circle.

QUICKSON: "What exclusive and brilliant circle would you most like to enter?" May (demurely): "An engagement ring just now."

Splendid Place.

FIRST NURSE-GIRL: "So you've got a new place?" Second Nurse-girl: "Yes." "Do you like it?" "Like it? Why, it is right in front of a police-station!"

A Landlord in the Chair.

MAN IN BACK SEAT (rising): "Mr. Chairman, I wish to move——" Absent-minded Chairman: "I've got several houses I'd like—beg pardon, Mr. Williams. What is your motion?"

Bad Look-out for Him.

OPERATIC COMPOSER (whose first act, consisting entirely of plagiarised music, is being hissed): "Goodness! What will they do when they hear my own music in the next act?"

No Need for Repairs.

"OH, father, there is a hole in my shoe—give me the money to have it mended. The water runs in like a sieve." "My son, you should always save money when you can. Just cut another hole and the water will run out as fast as it comes in."

Good Reason for it.

MRS. CAWKER: "Don't you think it is very strange that Mrs. Stivetts hasn't returned or paid any attention to my call yet?" Mr. Cawker: "Not at all. It is merely the result of force of habit." Mrs. Cawker: "How is that?" Mr. Cawker: "She was a telephone girl before her marriage."

What Men Couldn't Do.

"YOU may talk all you like about women being the weaker sex," said Mrs. Snipps, "but the women of this country did something last year that men could never do?" "And that was?" inquired Mr. Snipps. "Lost fifty million hairpins, and wore the wings of three million birds on their hats."

He Hadn't Been Missed.

MR. LEACH: "I only called, Miss Gaysome, to apologise for disappointing you last evening—but, really, I couldn't find time to come——" Miss Gaysome: "Don't mention it, Mr. Leach. We never thought of it at all till after the company left, when pa noticed that the decanter on the sideboard had something left in it."

A Hard Task.

TUCKER: "Why do I look so troubled? Well, last night I dreamt I died, and was buried, Parker, and I saw the tombstone at the head of my grave." Parker: "Saw your tombstone, eh! And what of it?" "Why, I'm trying to live up to the epitaph I saw on it."

Used to Smells.

FWEDDY (lighting a cigarette): "You—aw—don't mind my smoking, do you?" Stranger: "Not at all, sir. I work in a glue factory."

Starting with the Hair.

"WHAT are you going to make of your son?" "A violinist." "What teacher have you got for him?" "Oh, we have not got so far as that yet. We're letting his hair grow first."

How Mother Would Find Out.

FIRST BOY: "You're 'fraid to fight, that's what." Second Boy: "No, I ain't; but if I fight you my mother'll lick me." "How will she find it out, eh?" "She'll see the doctor going to your house."

Another Mystery.

MAGISTRATE: "How do you account for the fact that the man's watch was found in your pocket?" Prisoner: "Your worship, life is made up of inexplicable mysteries, and I hope your worship will consider that when passing sentence."

What There Was Would Do.

GAMEKEEPER (to small boy whom he has caught bird-nesting): "Noo. I'm just gaun to gie ye a richt guid lickin'." Small Boy: "Please, sir, dinna lick me; folks say I'm no a' there." Gamekeeper: "Weel, I canna help that; I'll just lick what there is o' ye there."

Easy to Tell.

IT was in a geography lesson to Standard I. in an elementary school. After speaking about boundaries of countries, the teacher said: "Now, suppose I were in France" (pointing to that country), "and I went into Germany, how could I tell when I had left France and entered Germany?" One youngster, aged seven, immediately answered: "You would hear the German bands, please."

Why the Knives were Blunt.

GENTLEMAN: "Waiter, why are the knives in this establishment always so blunt?" Waiter (confidently): "Well, sir, you see, city gents are always in a dreffful hurry, and when their knives is blunt it takes 'em so long to cut their meat that they're often obliged to go away and leave half of it; and the 'leavings' make beautiful stews! It would never do to have sharp knives—it would ruin the business, sir!"

Was it Likely to be Right?

SOME time ago a man went to visit a friend who was an inmate of a lunatic asylum. After a prolonged chat in a humorous, if not very edifying vein, the visitor thought it about time to go. "Is that clock right, Jock?" he asked of the inmate. Jock gazed at him for a minute or so in speechless amazement, then, laying his hand compassionately on his shoulder, said: "Man, do ye think it would be here if it was right?"

The Brain Gymnasium.

In these competitions a prize of £1 1s. will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solution of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £1 1s. will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in, the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award, in addition to the above, either ten of our gold-plated pencil-cases or ten popular novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one side only of the paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium, Nos. 73—78." to reach the Editor, *Short Stories*, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., by first post on Tuesday, April 1st, 1902.

The Editor's decision is final, and competitors must only enter on that understanding.

Readers are invited to submit puzzles, acrostics, conundrums, word-squares, etc., for publication on this page. A gold-plated pencil-case will be given to each reader whose attempts are used. All attempts must be vouched for as original, and, of course, it is distinctly understood that the sender of a puzzle must neither compete in the competition nor divulge to anyone the solution. Any reader found infringing this rule will be severely dealt with.

No. 73. CONUNDRUM.

What word is that in the English language which, without any transposition, will ask the question—"Have I strength?"

No. 74. BEHEADED WORDS.

Behead to stab and leave a useful fluid.
Behead a fruit and leave to plough.
Behead a kind of fodder and leave one fond of anything.
Behead an inclosure and leave a drink.
Behead a stream and leave misfortune.
Behead firm and leave to board.
Behead to wear out and leave information.

No. 75. ENIGMA.

My first half is equal to half a gallon; my second half is never more than three-quarters done; my whole contains millions. What is it?

No. 76. WORD SQUARE.

Make a double word square the connecting word of which signifies outside:

AAA CC EEEEEEEE F H L M NN OO P RR SSS UU YY.

No. 77. DOUBLE ACROSTIC.

My first is an animal nimble and small,
My second a species of work musical,
My third is a substance to soothe and to heal,
My fourth is a sound Nature oft will reveal.
My fifth—they are flowers—p'raps the choicest there be,
My sixth is what schoolmasters do, you'll agree;
My seventh is a serpent of vast size I'm told,
My eighth is a jar, often centuries old;
My ninth is a boon to the shipwrecked at sea,
My tenth you possess—by your face I can see.
Eleventh, my last, forms part of a sight
Of beauty, but ah! you must seek it at night!

Initials and finals form the name of a famous poet and one of his best-known works.

No. 78. CHARADE.

My whole is what every man in the world is entitled to, what every man can possess if he likes, and no man can dispossess him of. Cut off my first letter and I become what will render any man powerless; yet he will still possess my whole.

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 49 to 54.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mr. F. W. Graham, of 386 Stanhope Road, South Shields.

A pencil-case has been forwarded to:

L. Anderson, care of Fownes Forge, Tyne Dock.
Eric Melville, 26 New Walls Road, Bristol.
E. Friend, 65 Eastern Road, Romford.
J. Johnston, 21 Little Victoria Street, Belfast.
C. Harrison, 386 Stanhope Road, Tyne Dock, South Shields.
P. Baillie, 3 West Grove Terrace, The Grove, Blackheath.
J. McLean, 24 Valleyfield Street, Edinburgh.
T. Pollett, 2 Hillfield Gardens, Muswell Hill, N.
J. Boyd, 77 Glencairn Street, Motherwell.
J. Keeler, 192 Rochdale Road, Oldham.

SOLUTIONS.

49. MADAM.

50. YARN.

51. MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK.

52.
K atydi D
I rawad I
P otoma C
L ur K
I mmur E
N anse N
G alashiel S

53.
CLOD
LOVE
OVER
DERWENT
EMIR
NICE
TREE

54. COLUMN.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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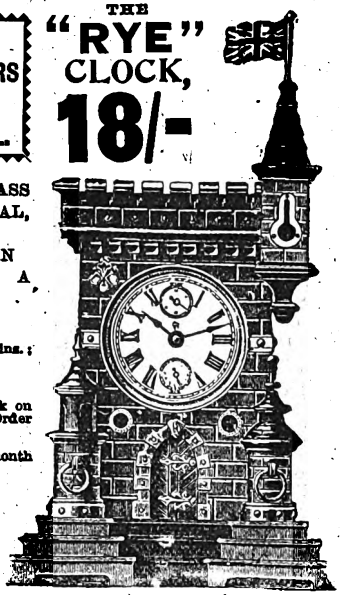

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MASTERS' FIELD & MARINE GLASS (Reg. No. 339763).

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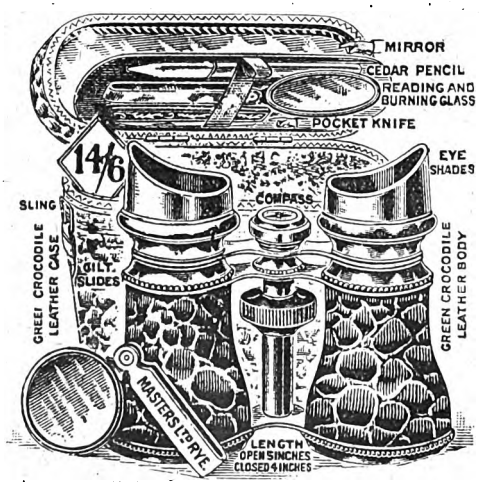
20 - MILE RANGE.



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Take up this paper with the right hand and gently revolve it, when you will see the circles going round.

Revolve in wider sweeps and the smaller circles will assume a fan shape, the large one remaining a circle.

No. 691.) For Week Ending March 29th, 1902. (One Penny.

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SHORT STORIES

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The Opening of the Story.

GERALD MORTIMER lives with his widowed mother and a small brother and sister at Moulstone Manor House. A great friend of his is Dr. Branksome, medical attendant at Moulstone Asylum. One night when Gerald is returning from a visit to the doctor, he is encountered by a wild looking woman, in a long blue cloak, who appears to be waiting about for someone. Gerald asks her if he can help her in any way. She refuses help and suddenly rushes away. Gerald starts to follow but loses all trace of her in a thick wood.

At breakfast the next morning, news reaches the Manor House that one of the asylum patients has escaped. Gerald at once thinks of the woman he met on the previous night, but learns that the missing person is a man.

Nina Penhurst, governess to the Mortimer children, meets Gerald in the garden, after he has been to the asylum to tell Dr. Branksome of his previous night's encounter, and learns further particulars of the missing patient from him. Gerald tells Nina that the man thought he had been cheated out of some property, and that his name was Anthony, not Felix Cordelvin.

Nina Penhurst looks up quickly as Gerald Mortimer utters the name. Then she makes as though to step forward and falls in a dead swoon.

In a back street in Whitechapel lives a broken-down doctor, Ephraim Manisty by name. The night after the escape from Moulstone Asylum, he is visited by a man giving the name of Causton, who offers him a fee of £1,000 to amputate the left arm of a friend of his at Streatham. Manisty consents and drives off with Causton. They do not notice that they are followed by a cab containing a woman in a dark blue cloak. She watches them enter the grounds of the house at Streatham.

When Manisty sees his patient, who is in charge of Causton's son, he finds that nothing is the matter with his left arm, but on Causton threatening to shoot him if he does not perform the operation he consents to do it.

A week later Nina Penhurst and her two young charges, Harold and Gladys Mortimer, are out for a walk, during which they visit the ruins of Moulstone Castle. While the children are playing, Gerald comes on the scene, and declares his love for Nina. She says she cannot accept it, but gives no reason. Just at this moment a cry of distress is heard from Harold. Gerald rushes to the spot, and there finds that the boy has discovered the dead body of a man dressed in Asylum clothes, with his left arm missing, it having been clumsily amputated.

The following day Gerald goes round to see Dr. Branksome, who tells him that he has received only that morning an anonymous letter containing £20 to pay for Felix Cordelvin's funeral. On seeing the letter Gerald finds that it is from Nina. Dr. Branksome's assistant comes in just at that moment to ask him to come and see one of the patients, and excusing himself to Gerald he goes out. Gerald at once gets possession of Nina's letter, and burns it.

In a house at Streatham, two men, Roderick Vanstone, who had passed under the name of Causton, and his son Stephen, are in conversation, from which it transpires that the elder Vanstone is the legal guardian of Nina Penhurst, who had lived with him for some time until his persecutions drove her away. Mark Cordelvin, a distant relative of Nina's who had adopted her, had an only son, Anthony, who was weak-minded, and to him Mark had left a life interest in his fortune, it having to go to Nina on Anthony's death. Owing to the latter's affliction, the care of the money was intrusted to Vanstone, who, taking advantage of Anthony's misfortune, was using it for his own ends.

On Gerald Mortimer's return from the asylum he suddenly resolves to go to London to find Nina, and takes with him her letter to his mother, and while strolling along the Embankment, he encounters the woman in the blue cloak. Thinking he may get some information from her he asks where she lives. Instead of replying she scatters a bag of sand in his eyes and makes off.

Inspector Trench is sent from Scotland Yard to Moulstone to investigate the murder of Cordelvin, and on asking to see the anonymous letter, which the local police told him had been received, he is informed by Branksome that it has been lost, but the envelope is found and this the Inspector takes away with him.

After Nina Penhurst left Moulstone she goes to stay with an old nurse of hers at Roehampton. One day while out sketching on Wimbledon Common she is confronted by Stephen Vanstone, who again professes his love for her, but she refuses to listen to him.

"Here, give me your hand," he says. "I'll make you listen to me."

"I refuse to listen to you!"

"You jade! I'll make you! Your hand, I say, your hand in true lover fashion."

He laughs a cruel hoarse laugh as he speaks, and forcibly seizes her hand. Then he grips her round the waist and with a sudden wrench he swings her round and drags her forward. Before her startled eyes lay the cold waters of the lake, then she feels her feet leave the ground and her body lifted up and swung twice backwards and forwards through the air. The rippling waters of the lake seems to pass out of sight, a fearful buzzing fills her ears, and then she knows no more.

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CHAPTER XI.

"Nina, You are Mine; Mine for Evermore!"

When, a few minutes later, Nina Penhurst opened her eyes, she gazed out upon the lake with a feeling of wonderment that she was not in its midst. The feeling, too, surprised her, that she was not in a drenched condition, for the belief that she had been thrown into the water, was strong upon her during her first moments of consciousness. Her sense of amazement changed somewhat as there stole into her mind the realisation that someone was with her still. She was being supported by an arm, an arm so strong, and oh! so gentle! And the owner of that arm was sprinkling her face with cold water. Her sense of wonderment deepened, deepened till a strange thrill shook her frame, and sent the blood once more into her pale face. A moment after, and she was conscious of a handsome face bending over her, and a pair of brave, manly eyes looking into hers. Infinite pity and infinite love they expressed, and in sheer self-defence she felt compelled to remove her gaze. Instinctively her lips shaped the question:

"Mr. Mortimer, you here?"

"Yes, Nina, it is I," Gerald returned, for he, indeed, it was, ignoring formality, and uttering his thoughts in respect to her name. "You are a little better?"

She struggled to her feet, he supporting her, and walked slowly to a seat near by, answering as she went:

"Yes, I am better now, much better; but I don't understand how it has all happened. Do you know that when I first came to I thought I was in the water? What has become of——" She hesitated a moment as she thought of Stephen Vanstone. "What has become of *him?*"

"A charge—a charge of what?" "Murder—the murder of Felix Cordelvin!"

"He has run away," Gerald replied, knitting his brow in a frown of suppressed anger. "I chanced to catch sight of the scoundrel just as he was apparently about to throw you into the water. I shouted, and he at once released you and ran for his life. I could not give chase, as I saw at a glance that you were unconscious. But now that you are better, tell me how it all occurred. Why did he attack you? The police must be informed."

A troubled look drifted into Nina's face. For a minute she was silent, struggling with herself. Then she said:

"No, no; let him go! he will not trouble me again."

There was supplication in her tone, violent distress in her face. Gerald felt he must defer his questions for a time.

"But I have forgotten," she suddenly broke out, "how can I ever thank you for what you have done? You came just in time. I might have been——" She glanced at the cold, rippling water and shuddered. "You have saved my life!"

Her heightened colour, and the look of gratitude in her beautiful eyes as she turned them full upon him, sent a thrill of pleasure through Gerald. A sudden impulse seized him—that impulse which in the past he had always checked save on one occasion. It was stronger upon him now than ever, and in his present over-wrought state he was powerless to resist it. He was at her side, close to her, bending down, in a moment.

"Nina, Nina"—his voice shook with emotion as he uttered her name—"why did you go away? Why did you leave us—leave me? You credit me with having saved your life. If I had really done so, your words and look would have repaid me a hundred-fold. If by the sacrifice of my life I could save yours, or add one whit of pleasure to it, I would go to my death with a smile of thankfulness upon my face. Oh, Nina! you do not realise the depth of my love for you. For the past days, since you left Moulstone, I have sought for you to tell you this. I have been in London for the past three days inquiring everywhere; and now I have found you, I want to ask you to be my wife!"

He had seized her hand by now, and was covering it with kisses. Useless for her to try and withdraw it, Nina turned her head away, her eyes filled with tears.

"You do not answer me, my darling," he said, trying in vain to steady his trembling voice. "Why did you go away from me?"

She forced back the lump in her throat.

"Do not ask me," she intreated, "do not ask, I beg of you!"

"But I must know—you must tell me."

"I cannot—I dare not!"

"Dare not? Nina, what is it you are saying?" His tones were of mingled passion and the gravest concern now. "Do you know *what* you are saying? What is it that you *dare* not tell to me—to me whose every thought is for you and your welfare? What dreadful secret can it be? I tell you I am your friend always—your slave if you will. Tell me your secret that I may share with you whatever suffering it involves. Nina, my darling——"

She raised a supplicating hand to interrupt his vehement speech.

"Don't say more, I beg of you," she said in a low, quavering tone. "You say you are my friend, and from my heart I believe you. But since you are my friend, I intreat you to withhold your inquiries."

"But I cannot!" he blurted out. "It is impossible. I have sought you out that I might help you. You do not seem to realise that others are looking for you, and that your very safety demands——"

"Mr. Mortimer!" Blank amazement was in her face now. "What do you mean? My safety? Others looking for me?"

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"Yes, yes; forgive me if I pain you. But that letter—that anonymous letter to Dr. Branksome inclosing the twenty pounds. It was in your handwriting."

She flashed upon him a look of indignation.

"What of that?" she retorted. "Why is any such private action to be discussed by other people?"

Gerald opened his eyes in unfeigned astonishment at the frank avowal which her words implied. The discussion was mystifying him; he did not know how to proceed for a minute. But within his heart was a feeling of a great, self-imposed task, unfulfilled. He felt he must pursue the subject at any cost.

"I tried to help you," he said quietly. "Dr. Branksome showed me your letter—he was ignorant as to whom it had come from. I watched my opportunity, and I stole it!"

Her expression of amazement grew.

"You stole my letter?" she said; "I do not understand.

Agony was writ plainly on Gerald's face now. His utter failure to make her understand the dreadful suspicion under which she was, was causing him the acutest distress. No use was it to beat about the bush. He must give out the truth point-blank.

"Nina!" he spoke gravely, but gently, "you say you do not understand. I will explain to you briefly. Your sudden disappearance from Moulstone is being connected with the murder of Felix Cordelvin. No; don't interrupt me, but hear me out, and believe that if I give you pain, it is best that you should know. Your disappearance has created certain terrible suspicions—utterly baseless, God knows they are—but they exist. They were merely idle village talk at first, based on the coincidence of time. But when that anonymous letter came, suspicion deepened. That was why I stole it. Ah! forgive me, and don't, pray don't misconstrue my mental state when I did it. I took it because, although a perfectly innocent document, yet in the hands of the police it might become a terrible weapon against you; my legal training told me that. But the theft was useless, for Dr. Branksome has written me that the police have possessed themselves of the envelope."

"Well," Nina Penhurst was strangely calm, "what of that?"

Gerald fixed his eyes upon the ground and answered clearly and deliberately:

"They may base upon it a charge against you."

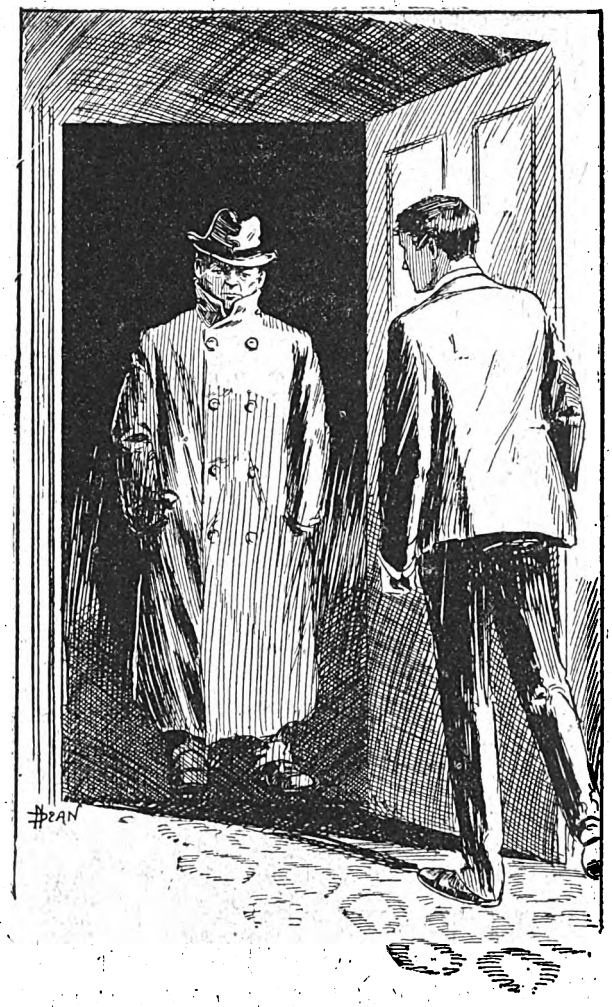
"A charge—a charge of what?"

"Murder—the murder of Felix Cordelvin!"

For five seconds Nina Penhurst sat motionless, her face and body rigid, her eyes staring straight before her. Then the muscles of her beautiful face twitched spasmodically, her body seemed to collapse, and a second later she buried her face in her hands and burst into a violent torrent of tears.

The heart within Gerald's breast gave a great bound as he saw the result of his words. Grief of that sudden, heart-breaking kind was the surest sign of her absolute innocence. Had she been guilty—though, Heaven knew that, puzzled as he had been by past events, he had never for a moment sullied her memory with the slightest suspicion—she would have been indignant, would have repelled his words with withering scorn. And so even while she cried within two yards of him, her fragile form shaking with her sobs, he let her be, and rejoiced secretly.

Loving her with his whole soul as he did, however, he could not sit for long inactive. So it happened that presently he edged up to her, and with gentle action his left arm stole around her waist, while with his right hand he tenderly smoothed away the hair that caressed her forehead. His caressing action seemed to soothe her. Her sobs lessened in number and intensity. He bowed his head and placed his lips tenderly on her cheek. She, who had so emphatically repelled him before, and was as docile nd unresisting as a little child now.



Gerald scrutinised the man closely, there was something about him he did not like.

"Nina, my darling," he whispered gently, "be brave! Don't cry. No harm shall come to you."

His words and caresses were balm to her troubled spirit. Her head reclined now upon his shoulder. For the time she was happy.

But her sense of her position suddenly came back to her, and she started, disengaging herself from his embrace.

There was a hue as of a blush-rose upon her face now, and for a moment there danced in her eyes a look of ecstatic joy—that look which only a girl in love ever has. Then the look passed, a troubled expression supplanting it. Her lips formed for speech, and quivered:

"What have I done?" she murmured; "what have I done?"

Gerald looked upon her with a smile of infinite tenderness.

"You have made me the happiest man in the whole world," he replied softly.

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A look of dismay came into her eyes. "I have done wrong," she said. "I ought never to have allowed myself —oh! why did you?"

Distress once more was in her face, her tone, her whole bearing.

"Nina, my love!" he exclaimed fervently, "don't, don't regret the past few minutes. You have uttered no word to me, but your eyes have told me plainly that you love me. Is it not so, my darling?" He took her in his arms as he spoke, and lowered his lips to hers. "Ah! now your lips have confirmed what your eyes had already told me. Nina, Nina, you are mine, mine for evermore." He clasped her to his breast again and again.

CHAPTER XII.

Trapped!

Gerald Mortimer sat alone in his chambers later that night. He knew everything now. Unable to withstand the powerfully persuasive force of his affection and tender solicitude, Nina Penhurst had opened her overburdened heart to him, and poured out her long-concealed secret.

She had told him the story of her young life, briefly, but without curtailment or omission of vital points. She had spoken of the time when, orphaned while yet of tender years, she had been taken into the house of her old relative, Mark Cordelvin, and upon his death under the guardianship of Roderick Vanstone. Of Anthony Cordelvin she had spoken, of his mental weakness, his antipathy to herself; of his ownership of the property during his lifetime. Then she had detailed the persecutions of Stephen Vanstone, who, despite her protestations, had persisted even up to that day, in thrusting upon her his altogether unwelcome attentions.

All these details Gerald Mortimer had listened to with the closest attention, now asking a question for the fuller understanding of an intricacy, now making a note of some important point for future reference.

"And now there is one thing more to tell you, Gerald, dear," she had said, "and that, perhaps, one of the most vital. I have told you already that Anthony Cordelvin is a distant cousin, and that he is not sane. Felix Cordelvin was also a distant cousin!"

Gerald had started from his chair in amazement.

"Felix Cordelvin!" he had echoed. "The murdered man?"

She had inclined her head affirmatively. "Yes, he was my cousin, a generation removed, it is true, but still my cousin; yet in all my life I had never seen him. In his youth he had gone to Australia with his sister, Ruth Cordelvin. He was wild and reckless then, so I have heard, and certain eccentricities of character which he possessed, were shared by his sister. I know but little of my few and distant relatives, the Cordelvin family seems to be dying out, but I know that mental weakness has shown itself in many directions. The fact has always been a menacing terror to me. I have thought and thought about it, till sometimes I almost fancied that my own brain might go some day. That indeed is the haunting idea of my life."

"That is your secret?"

"Yes; that is what I would have kept hidden from you—what sent me away from your house. Till that morning when the news of the escape came, I had not the slightest idea that Felix Cordelvin was in England. When I learnt from your lips the name of the poor, dead lunatic, all my fears returned with tenfold terror."

"That was why you fainted that day in the garden?"

"It was the juxtaposition of the two names, Anthony and Felix, that terrified me. Those two names, remember, had been indelibly impressed on my mind by constantly brooding over their owners' tendency to mental weakness.

"And now, Gerald," she had concluded, "I have told you my secret. My heart is lighter, but the burden of my secret still remains upon my mind. You have declared your love for me, and have wrung from me an avowal that it is reciprocated. But now that you know my history, now that you know the predisposition of my family to insanity, you will recognise the impossibility of our ever becoming more to one another than we are now."

"I shall recognise nothing of the kind," Gerald had struck in vehemently, and forthwith had smothered Nina with kisses. "I will not press you to marry me," he had added, "till this mystery of Felix Cordelvin has been elucidated, but after that, Nina darling, I shall ask you again."

It was over all these things that he was pondering as he sat later on that evening, in his chambers.

How simple and natural seemed the whole course of her conduct, now that he knew the motive which had actuated it. Her going away after he had declared his love for her; the strange, inexplicable letter to his mother; the anonymous letter to his friend Branksome; all these circumstances were clear as noonday now.

His first task must then be, to clear Nina's name of the black suspicion which had grown up around it. A talk with the police would quickly dispel all doubts regarding the innocence of Nina. Dr. Branksome had given him the name of the Scotland Yard officer who was in charge of the inquiry. He would see Inspector Trench at the very first opportunity. He would drop him a line now, and if the detective were in town, the interview might take place in the morning. Rising from his seat he walked across to his desk, took out writing materials, and indited a note to the inspector. It was quite short, merely half-a-dozen lines asking the officer to wire him where and when he might see him, and giving as a reason for the request that he had important information to impart to him in connection with the Moulstone murder. This note he inclosed in an envelope and addressed to Detective-Inspector John Trench, New Scotland Yard. The flap of the envelope was on his lips preparatory to sealing it, when suddenly there came a knock at his door, outside on the landing.

Who could it be? None of his friends knew that he was in town, and it was certainly too late for professional callers. The knock was repeated. He placed the sealed letter in his pocket and strode to the door.

A short, very thick-set man, muffled up to the chin by the collar of a long ulster, stood upon the threshold as he opened the door.

"Good-evening, sir," said the visitor, "sorry to disturb you, but are you Mr. Mortimer—Mr Gerald Mortimer?"

"Yes; that is my name. What do you want?"

"I've come from Miss Penhurst—leastways, from Mrs. Nainby, at whose house she lives. Miss Penhurst has been took ill, sir, mysteriously ill, so Mrs. Nainby says, and wants to see you at once."

Gerald's heart beat rapidly in his breast.

"Miss Penhurst taken ill? Why, she was quite well when I left her a few hours ago."

"Yes, sir, I know that. But after you'd gone she was took ill sudden like."

Gerald scrutinised the man closely. There was something about him that he did not like; some vague suspicion that all was not as it seemed. Yet, if Nina were ill he must not doubt, must not hesitate simply because of the unprepossessing appearance of the messenger. He spoke again:

"Why didn't Mrs. Nainby telegraph?" he asked.

"That's the very thing I said, sir," replied the man, "why not telegraft, I sez to Mrs Nainby. It'll be quicker, I sez, likewise cheaper. But the old lady wouldn't. She wouldn't trust the telegraft; something might go wrong, she said, and the poor old soul was that

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worrited that I couldn't refuse to come when she asked me."

"Who are you?"

"Ned Stebbings is my name, sir," answered the man, as though quoting from a card; "jobbing gardener I am, by the hour or day; flowers, vegetables, and fruit, outdoors or under glass. I'm a neighbour o' Mrs. Nainby's, you see, sir, and she's bin kind to my missus, and I couldn't refuse to come for her, could I, sir?"

The man's naive garrulity quashed whatever suspicions Gerald had previously entertained.

"All right," he said, "I'll get my coat and hat and come with you at once."

"Right, sir, I've got a cab waitin' outside; the one I came in."

Together the two passed out of the house and made their exit from the Temple, by way of Middle Temple Lane, into the Strand.

"Here we are, sir," remarked Stebbings, indicating a four-wheeler standing close to the kerb; "after you, sir."

Gerald entered the cab. Stebbings gave some hasty instructions to the driver. The latter whipped up his horse, and the fly started.

Scarcely had it traversed a distance of fifty yards, when, all without warning, Gerald felt a tight grip of his throat. He threw up his hands to throw off his assailant, but ere he could put his intention into action, a heavy blow upon the side of his head dazed him. Something was clapped over his mouth, and in the few moments in which he combated his departing consciousness, he became dimly aware of a sweet odour filling his nostrils, his throat, his whole being. His arms dropped helplessly to his side, his head fell forward on his breast, and his whole frame collapsed on the seat of the carriage.

Then the man who had given his name as Ned Stebbings let down the window of the vehicle, thrust out his head towards the driver, whispered, "It's all right!" and the fly turned down a street to the left, towards the Embankment.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Shriek in the Night.

After Stephen Vanstone, alarmed by the shout uttered by Gerald Mortimer, had dropped the unconscious form of Nina on the edge of the lake, he had, as Gerald himself had phrased it, "run for his life." Mortal fear was upon him as he beheld Nina's rescuer approaching, and it lent speed to his legs. The distance, however, that separated him from the other was considerable, and he was enabled to reach a grove of trees, and conceal himself among the thick, dead undergrowth, from the sight of Gerald. Having done which, he, for the first time, halted to recover his breath, and stared cautiously back.

From where he was crouching he could still see the

A rough bed had been prepared beforehand, and upon this he was laid, still gagged, and with his hands bound behind him.

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spot by the lake-side which he had quitted, and he drew a deep breath of infinite relief, as he observed the limp form of the unconscious Nina, being supported by the arm of Gerald Mortimer. He was not being pursued then, nor would he be now. This reassuring reflection stayed the fluttering of his cowardly heart, and cried halt to his feeling of trepidation. Since his presence there among the undergrowth would be quite unsuspected, it might be worth while to stay and watch what would be the upshot of the encounter between Nina Penhurst and her rescuer. And if he were to stay, he might as well be within earshot as well as eyeshot, of the two on the bank.

Thus it happened that Stephen Vanstone, making a careful circuit, and creeping stealthily from bush to bush, contrived to get within quite a short distance of the two unsuspecting figures.

So long as they stayed he stayed, and not till he had become possessed of Gerald's name and his address in town, did he quit the task he had set himself of dogging his footsteps. Then, and then only, did he return to the house on Streatham Hill.

"I have had a busy day," he explained to his father, as he sat down to eat something. "I have seen your beauteous ward."

"Nina Penhurst—no!"

"I have—stumbled across her quite by accident on Wimbledon Common, and made love to her."

"H'm, and with what result?"

"With the result that I discovered she hates me more than ever," and the son gave to his father an account of everything that had taken place.

Roderick Vanstone listened intently during the recital. At the conclusion he rose from his chair and paced the room uneasily.

"You have been a fool, Steve," he said bluntly, "a great fool. Don't you see that in assaulting this girl you draw attention to yourself? Don't you see that she will give information to the police, and that you will be sought for?"

The other answered with an evil smile.

"No, I don't see it," he retorted; "I don't see it, because I happen to know she won't face the publicity of a police-court, I heard her refuse to give this lover of hers any information about me."

"Bah! what a child you are, Steve! Don't you know women well enough to realise that the request she refuses one moment she will grant—even unasked—the next. She will tell this Mortimer fellow all about you. He will inform the police, or if he doesn't do that will wait upon you with a hunting-crop."

Stephen Vanstone's shoulders gave an involuntary shudder as if he felt the sting of a whip already upon them.

"What am I to do, then?" he asked a little anxiously.

Once more his father paced the room before replying. Within his cunning brain was revolving the whole sequence of recent events, and in its train came the suggestion of a scheme for removing from their path this new and unexpected peril which he plainly saw would soon threaten them.

"I can't tell you how your childish folly has annoyed me," he said. "Such conduct is bound to bring the police upon us." He paused for a moment; then added quickly: "That must be avoided at any cost. This Mortimer fellow must be got out of the way before he has time to take steps. You have his address?"

"Here it is; I made a note of it."

"Very well, then. We must get hold of him to-night, do you hear. Stebbings must go and get him away. Burge can go with him and act as coachman. I'll contrive a tale."

The tale that was contrived we are already aware of. Stebbings and Burge (the two unscrupulous knaves in the employ of Roderick Vanstone) duly departed on their nefarious mission. For an hour or two after their departure the elder Vanstone sat thinking and talking the matter over with his son, planning the difficult future of this new development, impressing on his headstrong offspring the necessity of exercising the utmost care in the future.

"Providing Stebbings is successful to-night," he remarked, "we can manage to smooth over the obstacles which you have created to-day. This fellow Mortimer will remain in this house till future events guide me to a decision as to his ultimate fate. But remember that never, under any circumstances, must he see you."

"But what is to happen to him? Are you going to keep him here? Is he to remain here all his life?"

"I have already remarked," replied the elder man, "that future events must guide us as to his ultimate disposal. We cannot decide yet."

"It would be better to—put him out of the way."

"It may become necessary," returned Roderick Vanstone, "but till it is, we hold our hand."

"But you spoke just now of arousing the attention of the police," said the son; "won't the mysterious disappearance of Gerald Mortimer, barrister-at-law, do that more than any act of mine?"

The father darted at his son a look of cunning.

"Yes it will," he replied slowly and calmly; "but it won't draw the attention of the police to us. They will put a vastly different interpretation on Mortimer's disappearance."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"They will suspect that he has disappeared to save himself."

"To save himself? From what?"

"From a charge of murder! The murder of Felix Cordelvin! Do you hear, Steve, my boy—the murder of Felix Cordelvin? Ha! ha! ha! already local gossip at Moulstone has connected him with it. He found the body, you know, and there are vague rumours that he has stolen a letter connected with it."

Just then a low rattle of carriage wheels was heard outside, and a moment later Roderick Vanstone was hastening to open the door.

"Is that you, Stebbings? Everything right?"

"Yes, sir," whispered the man, "everything right as a trivet. He swallowed my tale, though he was a bit suspicious at first, and followed me like a lamb. I gave him a dose as soon as I got him into the carriage, sir. He's still unconscious."

"That's good; bring him in, and put him in the large room at the back of the house. You and Burge had better take turns in watching him to-night. I'll look after Mr. Cordelvin."

"Very good, sir."

Carefully the unconscious body of Gerald Mortimer was lifted from the cab. Then he was carried through the hall, and down the two or three stairs to the back of the house. A rough bed had been prepared beforehand, and upon this he was laid, still gagged, and with his hands bound with cord behind him.

He lay there, sleeping soundly, still under the influence of the drug. The watchers had retired to a room near by, finding their presence needless. Hour followed hour; the influence of the drug was gradually passing. His frame quivered involuntarily as he slept. Within his brain consciousness seemed to be slowly returning. His eyes opened again and stared glassily into vacancy. He was awake, yet incapable of receiving mental impressions. Conscious of himself, he was unconscious of his surroundings. His body was limp, inert, incapable of moving. His condition was as that of a babe new-born, without the instinct to cry out or move. While he lay in this state of complete passivity, there suddenly resounded through the house a strange, weird sound—half howl, half piercing shriek! Who had uttered it, and what did it mean?

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(To be continued.)

PIERRON'S GIFT.

A Touching Instance of a Simple Shepherd's Devotion.

In the autumn, when the Pyrenees begin to wrap themselves in snow, the shepherds leave the mountains of Bearn with their shivering flocks, their lazy old donkeys and their shaggy dogs, say good-bye to their wives, kiss the little ones, and go singing away toward the plains of the Adour, where the pastures are always green and the sunshine always kind.

And toward St. Michael's the country folk of Landes see them coming lazily along, folded in their rough red capes, through the broad white roads shaded with dying plané trees.

The mountaineers enter into parley with the planters, and soon the flocks are feeding at will in the meadows, and their owners being housed and fed by the people of the valley, to whom is given in return a part of the milk, a pair of great woollen stockings for the master of the house, and a pair of knitted mittens for the mistress.

This lasts until the sowing of the grain early in May. Then the sheep begin to bleat strangely, the donkey brays impatiently, the dog gazes at the distant Pyrenees, and some fine morning, as the swallows are returning, the flocks instinctively take the road towards the blue peak of Ossau, back through the lovely white roads, where the plane-trees are flaunting their first fresh leaves.

Each parish in the valley has the same shepherds, who return to winter in the same farmhouses each autumn, perhaps a little more bent and a bit whiter, and sometimes the planter who has expected an old man will see a young fellow guiding the flock, who stares at him and tells him between two couplets of his song, that his father, the former shepherd, died "down there" on the mountain at St. Louis' or St. John's.

A pretty girl was busy shaking the chestnut tree which stood before a white house one day early in October, when she saw a large flock of sheep approaching, led by a sturdy donkey.

"He, beautiful lady!" shouted a little shepherd who was just visible behind the beast's ears. "Would you tell me how to find the farmhouse of La Ribere?"

"This is the place," answered the young girl.

"I might have known it. My flock took the road by themselves. Well, lady, I am Pierron, the son of your old shepherd, Mathias, who died on St. Lawrence's."

"Very well, Pierron, come this way. I will take you to my father."

Pierron was received in the farmhouse of La Ribère as his father had been, and the sheep began to graze in the familiar pastures, with the well-known horizon, off the same grass whose fragrance was so sweet to them.

He was a nice little fellow, this Pierron. He was small and dark and sang in a fresh voice, which the echoes seemed to love He was not more than twenty, but he knew many interesting stories, which were very entertaining in the long winter evenings to the daughter of the farm, pretty Maria de la Ribère.

And Maria, a little creature, all smiles, whose eyes seemed soft as the light of the moon to the young men of the valley, loved to hear Pierron tell stories of the werewolf and sorceries and spells cast upon people through effigies. She loved to hear him praise the valley of the Ossau and the blue mountains, with their lace-like white tops, which he climbed in his childhood, and she loved still more the beautiful mittens he knit for her at Christmas, and the fat little lamb he gave her the day she was eighteen.

And it was with great sadness that Pierron discovered some tiny white flowers on a cherry tree one evening.

Spring came. The sheep began to bleat in the warm meadows where the daisies were in bloom. The donkey pricked up his ears and looked towards the peak of Ossau.

"May you be with God, Maria!" said Pierron in the fashion of the country, "I must go away again."

Maria bent her head a little and grew very pink.

Then Pierron took her fingers and looked down at the point of his sabots.

"Maria, if you have the same sentiments for me which I have for you, we can be married next spring. I love you very much, and I wish I could take you down there on the foot of that round mountain, where I have a good mother, who would love you too. We are not very rich, but"—here his voice lowered—"I can give a fortune to the person I love."

"Now, Pierron, how would you do that?" said Maria, raising her eyes.

"Well, I have an uncle who was as poor as we are once. He has bought a house now every year for twenty years, and nobody has ever been sick in his family. I know a servant of ours who never inherited anything and saved 20,000 francs in a few years, and his wife has the finest children in the country."

"What do you mean, Pierron?"

"Well, my uncle and this man of ours carry the sting of a snake, and it brings them good luck."

"That brings good luck—the sting of a snake?"

"Yes; the sting of a certain kind which I know about."

"Why don't you carry one?"

"Because to have good luck one must carry it without knowing it—some one else must put it in one's clothes. So my aunt hid the sting of a snake in my uncle's belt, and the wife of our servant slipped one of them into her husband's shirt. At our house on Sundays, when the men play tenpins or bowls for money, their wives put a sting in their pockets and pretend not to be doing anything at all, and if their husbands do not see them they always win."

Maria did not dare to smile at the little shepherd. She believed herself in a great many mysterious things of which the old country women had told her in whispers as they crossed themselves.

"Well, then, Mademoiselle Maria, if you will think about what I have said this summer?"

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"I will think about it, Pierron."

The air was soft, the fields were full of robins, the apple trees were strewing the fresh young grass with flowers. The sheep, after some aimless manœuvring, ranged themselves in a column and went down the road of the plane-trees. Pierron was gone.

For a long time Maria stood motionless under the chestnut trees and saw the fading figure of the little shepherd turn round towards her. For a long time she could hear the bleating of the sheep, then she thought she saw the donkey's back upon the crest of the hill—then she saw only the dim blue mountains.

And when Pierron returned to La Ribère the next autumn the kindly glow in Maria's great eyes was there no longer.

Young girls in the valley, like young girls in the mountain, without doubt, sometimes admire a tall, strong fellow, who earns 200 francs a month in a large city more than a slip of a shepherd, whose only possessions are the stings of a snake in his belt. That is why Maria de la Ribère had promised her hand during the summer to a handsome countryman, the lucky Joseph de Tauzia, who was the coachman of a rich gentleman in Bordeaux, and who promised to take Maria to the city when they were married, Maria being previously bedecked with ribbons and jewellery of course.

Pierron's songs were sad that winter.

But the shepherd was a kindly sort of fellow, who never wished any one ill.

So he gave a pair of beautiful white mittens to Maria as he had the winter before, and some fine brown stockings to the farmer, and offered his fattest and curliest lamb to the young girl on her nineteenth birthday. He greeted the magnificent Joseph with respect—that elegant coachman of Bordeaux—when he came to pay court to his intended during the carnival, and Maria never heard an unkind word from the lips of the shepherd, nor saw a spark of malice in her old lover's eyes.

But Pierron had forgotten how to tell his entertaining stories of the winter before. He had forgotten how to enjoy the delicious chestnuts perfumed with a fig leaf, which Maria offered him with an indifferent hand as she offered them to every one else in the house. The shepherd watched the young girl from a distance without speaking a word, and if Maria surprised him he lowered his eyes, said "good night" to his host, then went to his bed beside the sheep in the barn, where he could hear the gentle breathing of the whole flock.

One day Maria came out into the field to speak with Pierron. The spring sun was warm. The poplar buds were bursting in the breeze. All the country folk were ploughing for the sowing time.

"Pierron, I am going to be married in three weeks, the first Thursday in May. If you wish to do me a pleasure, you will stay until the wedding, and be one of my bridesmen."

"Oh, many thanks, Mistress Maria," he stammered, "but I think I cannot stay so late. My sheep will feel the spring coming before your wedding, and when they wish to go I must follow them."

He did not go the next week, however, as he had told every one he would. Several times he packed his clothes and washed his donkey for the great journey, but he could not seem to leave. It was a sheep which fell ill or a lamb lost on the heaths, which must be found before he could return to the mountain. Little by little the days grew warmer. The first of the grasshoppers had begun to chirp. The locusts filled the bushes, and one day during a storm Pierron saw a long viper crawling by the edge of the brook. The wedding day had come.

* * * * *

"What are you doing there, you scamp?"

It was the coachman of Bordeaux, the splendid Joseph, all in black, who spoke this as he suddenly came upon Pierron in the bridal chamber on the wedding morning.

"Will you tell me what you are doing there?"

Pierron was caught. He quickly thrust something like a needlecase into his pocket and reddened as he looked at the bridegroom.

A cloak of Maria's was lying on a chair. The shepherd seemed to have been handling it, and stepped over quickly as if to hide it.

"Here, you rogue, will you get out of here?"

Joseph suspected the shepherd of some theft. Pierron saw the suspicion in the coachman's eyes.

"I have not been stealing," he cried, trembling. "I swear that I have not been stealing."

"What were you doing then? Answer me."

The little shepherd cast a look of reproach at Maria's *fiancé*.

"I want to know what you have been doing in this room?"

"I cannot tell," answered Pierron. "No, I cannot tell."

The coachman made a threatening move toward Pierron, who stood trembling and twisting his cap in his hand. Then he took him by the ear and sent him flying out with a savage kick.

"Get out of here, you rascal—you jail-bird!"

And Joseph lost no time in telling of the occurrence to his intended.

Maria was all in white. Her god-mother was finishing her toilet before a mirror. The bride was so lovely that the guests were standing speechless looking at her with their eyes and mouths wide open, as they would gaze at the sun. The wedding party was about to leave.

When Maria heard this story from the man who in an hour would be her husband, she went swiftly to her room. The wardrobe door was half-open, and her cloak was thrown on a chair. She grew very pale. She examined the cloak quickly, and under the lining, where there was a ragged, unfinished cut, she discovered a white paper, and in this paper was something black and long and fine ending in a fork. A sting! She laid the cloak on a chair. She stole out of the room, and, making a detour so that no one could see her, she went towards the barn. She heard the sheep bleating. She found the little shepherd, with his eyes all red, tying his clothes in his red cape.

And then, all white in the midst of the white sheep, she, who, perhaps had never caressed a man before, went straight to Pierron and kissed him.

And the little shepherd closed his eyes.

"You found it!" he stammered. "All the worse! I wanted to hide it so that it would bring good luck to you. Now it has lost its power. I will never come here again. May you be with God, Maria!"

And he was gone. The sunshine was gentle. Down from the tree-girt road Pierron turned to watch the bride cross the green fields to the church.

Then from the top of the hill, where he could still see the farmhouse of La Ribère, he stopped to listen to the bridal bells.

And, crossing himself, he joined his flock, his donkey, his dog, and went on towards the dim blue mountains.

Jean Rameau.

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Robbed by a Madman.

The Story of a Clever Burglary.

I LIVE in a delightful little villa at Eastbourne. It stands with its pretty garden in an unfrequented street. It is, indeed, the home of a poet.

One hot day in June I was playing the violin when there was a knock at the door, and a man wholly unknown to me came into the room. He appeared to be about fifty years of age; he was small, well-built and muscular. He sat down without ceremony on the sofa. I did not feel much reassured. He took off his hat and revealed a grey head that inspired respect.

"Pardon me, sir," he said in a sad voice, "for coming in without being properly announced. I am a neighbour of yours, and make bold on that account. I adore music, and heard you playing, and I had a keen desire to make your acquaintance."

"A crank," I thought to myself.

"Your violin has a remarkable tone, and you play with great talent."

Alas! for human vanity. This compliment caused my distrust to vanish.

"I possess an excellent violin," I said. "It is an Amati."

The stranger took the violin and examined it on both sides.

"It is one of the best I ever saw," he said. "It is worth £200."

"I know it is a rare violin," I said. The stranger took it up again and drew the bow across the strings.

"It is not my instrument. I play the violoncello. When we know each other better, if you permit it, I shall be very happy to have some music with you."

"That will be easy," I said. "I play the piano a little."

"I live in a cottage not very far from your own. What were you playing just now?"

"One of Mendelssohn's quartettes."

"What a great artist he was."

"I prefer him to Beethoven."

"So do I, sir; we have the same tastes. If I were not afraid of being indiscreet I would ask you to continue playing. You play with so much expression."

How can a man resist a request so complimentary? I took up my violin.

"You cannot have heard me properly, sir; my playing is very commonplace."

"I don't know how well you play, but I know, sir, that you feel what you play. That is everything in art."

I commenced the adagio, putting my whole soul into it. When I finished I noticed that the stranger was inspecting all the objects in the room. He turned to me.

"That was beautiful," he said. "How well you rendered the great master's thoughts. I thank you, and once more beg you to forgive the freedom with which I intruded on your privacy. I am rather eccentric. I have suffered so much."

The stranger put his hand to his head.

"I lost the wife whom I adored," he went on, "and, moreover, in the most horrible circumstances. I have been mad for a long time."

My apprehensions began to return, and I noticed a peculiar look in the man's eyes.

"I am cured now," he went on, "and I seek to forget in the pursuit of fine arts. You are sympathetic. I will tell you my story. The secret I shall confide in you is a terrible one."

"Hum!" I thought. "He's going a bit too fast for me."

"Sir," I replied, "I do not desire to revive painful memories."

"It will relieve me," he said. "I was twenty-two years old, and possessed of a good name, an independent fortune, and everything that was necessary for success in the world.

"I went about that time to stay with the Kingzett family, who lived in a superb castle in the environs of Glasgow. Mr Kingzett was the father of two ravishingly beautiful girls, Muriel and Denise. Attracted by their charms, I often went to the house, and soon became an intimate friend of the family. I loved them both and had no preference for either one. Soon I discovered that both girls were in love with me.

"The situation was most embarrassing.

"My visits became more and more frequent, and the greatest friendship existed between the young girls and myself. After much hesitation I decided in favour of Denise, the younger, and asked her to marry me. The grief of Muriel was intense. She concealed it, but from that moment bore towards her sister the most bitter hatred. The marriage was celebrated with princely functions, and attended by the most select society of Glasgow. Muriel was stoical; she feigned indifference, but the pallor of her face betrayed her, and threw a cloud over my happiness.

"As soon as the celebrations were at an end I left for Italy with my young wife. And there I spent the happiest days of my life. I worshipped Denise, and was at the summit of my ambition. After six months' joy, without a single trouble to mar it, we returned to my parents-in-law. Muriel received us with warmth. I thought she had got over her grief, and I felt reassured. Some time afterwards Denise began to lose her health. She had strange attacks of sickness, accompanied by pains in the head. She grew thinner and weaker, and her character commenced to change. She became nervous, irritable, fanciful.

"The old family doctor came to see her every day. He asked me odd questions, and I thought his old age had destroyed his judgment and made him fanciful.

"Denise grew worse and worse, and was obliged to take to her bed. Her sister's devotion to her was beautiful; she never left her bedside.

"I was beginning to despair. One evening, when Muriel was out of the room, Denise took my hand.

"'George,' she said, 'I am lost.'

"I cried aloud.

"'If you only knew,' she continued in an excited

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voice. 'It is horrible! I am dying and I have been poisoned by my sister!'

"'It is impossible. You are raving.'

"'Last night I saw her pour out the poison; she thought I was asleep.'

"'It is awful.'

"'She is jealous of my happiness and wants to become your wife. Swear to me that you will never marry her.'

"She took me in her arms, and, while I gave the promise, she fell back dead.

"It were useless to describe to you my grief.

"Muriel came in. I seized her by the hand and dragging her to the bed I confronted her with my dead wife.

"'Miserable girl!' I cried, 'behold your work. I know all.'

"She threw herself at my feet and confessed her crime saying she had done it because of her love for me.

"'I shall not give you up to justice,' I said. 'I cannot disgrace both your family and my own. It would kill your parents. You must disappear so that I can never find you again, or else——'

"'I will disappear,' she sobbed, 'I promise you; I will disappear for ever.'

"The next day she was found dead in her bed. She had taken poison—the same that she had given to her sister.

"The two sisters left me all their property.

"I hoped that was all over. Muriel dead, the horrible secret was known only to me. I could count on the old doctor. On my way back from the cemetery he touched me on the shoulder.

"'Sir,' he said to me, 'allow me to compliment you; you understand the uses of poison.'

"'What do you mean?' I asked.

"'I mean that your trial for murder will cause a commotion. I have long had my suspicions of the cause of your wife's death; to-day I have proofs. I have analysed the contents of the bottle which you used to poison your sister-in law!'

"'What! You accuse me?' I cried. 'You think I poisoned the wife I adored? For what purpose?'

"The doctor smiled sardonically.

"'See whom their deaths profit,' he said. 'You have come into the property of the victims. But that is not my affair—that is for the judge to decide.'

"I was astonished. Not only would the scandal I dreaded break out, but I myself was accused of the most terrible crime. Appearances were against me. It was enough to send me out of my mind."

At this point the stranger said:

"What would you have done in my place, sir?"

"But—sir," I stammered, "I really cannot say."

"I did not hesitate," he went on; "I confessed. I had my plan."

"'Doctor,' I said, 'I am a very guilty man. But I do not wish my crime to cover with shame two old and honourable families. I will kill myself.'

"'Very well,' said the doctor. 'You still have some good feelings. On that condition I will tell nothing.'

"I asked for the time necessary to put my affairs in order. He said he would accompany me, and stepped into the trap I had laid for him. Having said farewell to my wife's parents, we took the train together for a station in Cumberland, near an estate that belonged to me. As the train left the terminus I suddenly opened the door and pushed the old doctor, who was asleep, on to the line. It was quite dark. I had laid my plans. The doctor rolled under the train and the wheels passed over him.

"The train stopped. I called for assistance. I declared that the doctor had tried to get off the train when it was in motion. No one doubted me. He was dead, and I was saved!"

The stranger stopped speaking. I, for my part, felt very uneasy. He wiped his brow and continued:

"So much emotion had turned my poor head, and I became mad."

He rose.

"You have my secret," he said in a hoarse voice.

"I did not ask you for it, sir. After all, you only worry me."

"One of us is out of place," he cried threateningly.

He advanced towards me with staring eyes. I retired prudently behind the piano, because I knew that I was dealing with an enraged madman.

"I am going to throw you out of the window." He shook the curtains of the window that looked into the street. At the same moment there was a ring at the bell and I ran to open the door.

A gentleman, well-dressed and groomed, came in. He wore a plain suit of clothes, and was followed by two gigantic attendants.

"I am Dr. Maxfestown," he said, with a slightly foreign accent. "I am the director of a private lunatic asylum, and one of my patients has escaped. According to the information I have received he has concealed himself in your house."

"You have made no mistake, sir; you have come just in time," I replied, greatly relieved.

"Heaven be praised! It is a certain Mr. Lovett, an unfortunate man who went mad after his wife's death. He imagines that she was poisoned."

"And he wanted to throw me out of the window."

"That is his mania. We will at once relieve you of him. I must apologise for the annoyance he has caused you."

He pointed to the two men.

"Two of my assistants," he said. We went into the drawing-room. The madman seemed greatly agitated.

"He is going to have an attack," declared the doctor.

"Doctor," cried the madman, "this man is going to denounce me. I must have his life."

He made a rush at me. The two big assistants, not without difficulty, restrained him, and one of them took a strong cord from his coat.

"Your presence irritates him," said the doctor to me. "Would you be so kind as to conceal yourself while we take him away?"

I stepped into a cupboard.

"Oh, sir, how good of you! The family will never forget your kindness. They will come to thank you in person."

The doctor closed the door and turned the key. Then I heard signs of a struggle.

"Quietly, please! quietly, please!" Then followed a sound of moving furniture in my bedroom adjoining. The madman had evidently got away from the two assistants. After some time all became quiet again. The madman had evidently been captured.

In the excitement of the moment the doctor had forgotten to restore my liberty.

I remained in that cupboard till the evening.

A policeman heard me and let me out.

"And the madman?" I asked.

"What madman, sir?"

Then I saw that my valuable Amati violin, my pictures, my bronzes, and a priceless bracket of Louis XV. had vanished, with everything else in the house worth having.

I had been spoofed!

O. P. Wix.

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STARTS TO-DAY. **BEGIN AT ONCE.**

SHORT STORIES
NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH TOWNS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.
Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each set describing the name of a town of over 5,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you till we tell you to send it in.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

Cut to edge—>

Example:
To exclude monarch..... Barking.

1. A stand with divisions ..... 1 .....
2. A tree; a bullet ..... 2 .....
3. Mounds; an index ..... 3 .....
4. An agricultural implement; a way ..... 4 .....
5. A kind of onion..... 5 .....
6. To arouse; to catch a cricket ball ..... 6 .....
7. A cake; a brook..... 7 .....
8. Centre; 20cwts. ..... 8 .....
9. A long-legged boot..... 9 .....
10. A small piece of water ..... 10 .....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

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Cut to edge—>

The Fairy and The Elephant.

A Pathetic Circus Story.

CENTREPOLE TOM professed to know everything about all the distinguished people of the "profession" in all parts of Christendom, and he did know a great deal; for, in his humble capacity, he had served many of them in diverse countries, and, though a boastful man, he had never been detected in an inability to give trustworthy information. So, when it was announced, with a great show of large type, that "Christopher and the Fairy" had just landed from an Australian steamer, under contract for the remainder of the season, there was much excitement and curiosity among the people of the circus, and Centrepole Tom was at once exploited for knowledge concerning them.

"Hain't you never heard of Christopher and the Fairy?" he asked pityingly; "well, that beats me. The Fairy's the purtiest little trick, an' the way she kin do the flying trapeze is something 'stonishing. No, I hain't never seen her, but I know all about her. A feller worked for me last season that seen her at Melbourne, and he told me a whole string of stuff about her. Every man-jack under the canvas was dead gone on her, but she never took no notice of any of 'em, and didn't seem to care for nobody's society but the women's and that measly old Christopher."

"Is Christopher her husban'?" asked a long-legged young groom.

"No!" thundered Tom, with so great vehemence that the young man quailed, and dared not ask any more questions.

"Brother?" inquired one of the ring of "supers."

"No!" yelled the veteran master of the centrepole-hoist; "He ain't her husban', nor her brother, nor her uncle, nor her grandfather, nor her cousin."

The head hostler, as much a veteran as Centrepole Tom, and more modest and less theatrical than he, quietly said:

"No use making a fool of yourself and putting on airs before these boys here. I don't know who Christopher is, an' I ain't ashamed to say so. Now, who is Christopher?"

This was the supreme moment for which Centrepole Tom had waited. He turned himself round, and, looking steadily at the head hostler, said impressively and with the utmost deliberation:

"Christopher is an elephant."

It was a small speech, but it was some time after this before the two men became good friends again.

There was a commotion all through the small army of circus people when Christopher and the Fairy arrived. They did not come to the tents for two or three days after landing, as it was rumoured that Christopher had been seasick on the voyage and needed a little rest. When they did appear, however, they were cordially welcomed. The women of the circus found the Fairy (who, in private life, was known as Miss Camilla Armijo) to be a delightful girl, more substantial than a genuine fairy, to be sure, but hardly more so; for, although she was full-grown, she was so small and fragile that her professional name sat well upon her. There was a light touch of sadness in all her conduct, and Centrepole Tom explained this by saying that she had recently lost both her parents. How he discovered this nobody ever could learn. But it was clear at least that she was a very sweet and gentle little body, very young, and with no friend except old Christopher

I say "old Christopher" because it is impossible to associate anything but great age with his enormous proportions and overwhelming dignity. He was an East Indian elephant, of prodigious size. A more solemn and self-satisfied elephant it would be impossible to find.

It was very pretty to see how solicitous was the Fairy of her immense charge. She saw that he had a sufficient allowance of fresh, sweet hay, and, from a bag which she carried, she fed him with some dainties which she had for that purpose, and which he took in his lithe trunk with manifest tokens of gratitude. She patted his great jaws and said kind things to him, and he took it all as a matter of course, seeming to say:

"I see nothing at all strange in the affection, and solicitude which this beautiful little Fairy lavishes upon me; for am I not a very large and majestic elephant, and does she not know that I love her better than does anyone else in all the world?"

And it was pretty to see how gently she bade him good-bye until the evening performance, which would begin in two hours from that time.

There was a far greater crowd than usual at the performance that evening, for the flaming public announcements of "Christopher and the Fairy" had borne profitable fruit. Not only were the seats packed all the way up to the eaves, but rows of extra seats had been provided on the level ground facing the ring. Several acts were done before the manager announced the new performers.

When he had finished the elephant came slowly walking out, and thereupon rose a mighty shout of applause and a great clapping of hands. Sitting on the massive shoulders of the enormous brute was the Fairy, glittering with spangles. She was so small and fragile and dainty, and Christopher was so overwhelming and majestic and stern that the strange picture caught the audience with sweeping force, and the applause became deafening.

Christopher calmly marched into the ring and proceeded deliberately round it, the Fairy meanwhile guiding him with gentle hand-pressure on one side of his neck or the other, while with the other hand she threw kisses to the audience. Her bare, dimpled arms, and smiling dimpled cheeks, her rosy mouth, her large black eyes, and curling black hair in which diamonds shone, won every heart for her in that immense crowd; for so much sweetness and grace and daintiness they had never seen all at once in a circus-ring before.

The circuit of the ring completed, the elephant stopped and listened gravely to the sorry jokes of the clown. He had heard them before and was not to be amused. The Fairy bounded to her feet on the great animal's back and

there found room for some entertaining tricks of agility. Then she gave him a tap with her little slippered foot, and, in response, he brought his long trunk round, caught her by the waist, and set her gently on the ground. This made the audience applaud until the Fairy was almost deaf.

Other things—some old and some new—were done by the two, such as his walking over her, stepping ever so carefully, as she lay on the ground; recovering her handkerchief from the clown, who had stolen it and hidden it in his blouse; throwing her high in the air, and stepping forward in time to have her alight nimbly on his back; and things like that. Then came her act on the flying trapeze.

To prepare for this the clown brought her a flag, which she gave to Christopher to hold in his trunk. Then the clown threw a rope over a trapeze hung high in the air, and with a few parting caresses and whispered words to Christopher, she sprang to the rope and climbed it like a squirrel. She sat a moment on the trapeze bar, and then glanced down at Christopher, who sitting back on his haunches, the better to look so high, was gravely watching her. The band had stopped playing. A clear musical voice from above, dropping like pearls on the people below, called out:

"How was that, Christopher?"

The elephant waved the flag, and gravely nodded his approval. Then came the real work of the act—all sorts of agile turnings and graceful leaps from the main bar to one hung still higher; and after every one of these feats, each more daring than its predecessor, she would call down, in her musical voice:

"Was that all right, Christopher?"

And Christopher would wave the flag, and solemnly nod his approval, as much as to say:

"Of course it was all right; but we expect that from you, little Fairy!"

Finally came her greatest feat—it was to leap right across the ring from one trapeze to another. She rested awhile before undertaking it, and Christopher, knowing what was coming, braced himself, as though trying to give her strength for the dangerous task. The band played a spirited air while the girl sat still on the bar; then the music ceased, and a deep hush fell on the audience. The Fairy caught the bar in her hands and swung underneath it, and her clear voice rang out again:

"Keep a sharp eye, old Christopher!"

The elephant nodded and waved his flag, but with less stateliness than before. The Fairy began to swing backwards and forwards in the direction of the distant trapeze which she was to catch after her flight through the air. Farther and farther did she swing, higher and higher, back and forth, her glittering spangles looking like a shower of meteors. A ringing voice cried out:

"Now we go, Christopher!" and she loosed her hold and went flying away across the tent, higher and higher, to the apex of a graceful parabolic curve, then down towards the trapeze, still so far away, while the people held their breath, and many closed their eyes. Down sailed the small and graceful figure, coming quickly close to the goal; two eager hands were outstretched to seize the bar; one hand touched it and clutched it desperately, but the other missed its aim.

The momentum sent her flying far beyond, but she still held the bar with one hand, and the ropes which supported it creaked with the strain upon them. A hold with one hand was not enough.

The small hand slipped, and the girl went flying towards the ground. A suppressed cry of horror arose from the audience as the frail little body struck the ground at the entrance to the waiting-room, falling with a heavy, cruel sound that went into every heart in that vast assemblage, and that made the strongest men shudder and groan and cover their faces.

She fell near the feet of Centrepole Tom, who was standing behind the musicians, and he was the first to approach her. He straightened the body and looked in the blanched face and wide staring eyes, and silently prayed for even a moan from the silent, white lips. The audience arose in an uproar, and thousands pressed forward to see the poor, limp body on the ground.

But instantly there was a commotion from another cause. Christopher had seen the catastrophe, and he claimed the first right-of-way and the privileges of a friend. He came towards the packed mass of humanity with a roar that sent terror abroad, hundreds flying from his path. Others could not escape so easily, and of these some he flung right and left with his trunk, and others were packed closer on either side by the interposition of his enormous bulk. Soon he reached the side of the Fairy, lying so white and still, and he dropped to his knees beside her and groaned, and caressed her with his trunk.

Gentle hands were trying to find some life in the frail, crushed body when he came, but all fell back upon his terrible approach—all except Centrepole Tom, who feared not even the wrath of the giant Christopher. The elephant accepted his presence, seeing kindness in it.

Tom's heart beat violently as he saw a faint movement of the chest, and he nearly choked with joy when he beheld the lips move and the eyes close and then open again. Someone brought water, with which he sprinkled her face. This did much good, for she gasped and then sighed.

"She is coming to!" cried Centrepole Tom.

And surely she was; for, with returning life, came evidence of suffering, and deep lines of pain formed about her mouth and eyes. Christopher noticed it, for he fanned her more vigorously with his great ears. Consciousness came slowly back; and, when it had returned, the first thing the Fairy saw was her old friend Christopher kneeling beside her.

"Poor old Christopher! It will break your old heart to see me die. . . . You have loved me, Christopher, ... But they'll be good to you."

Tears trickled down her cheeks, the hard lines deepened, the poor face became more pinched and drawn, the beautiful eyes wandered vacantly and then closed, and the Fairy passed into unconsciousness again.

A physician now came and knelt beside her, and, after he had examined her as well as he could, he said:

"She is desperately hurt, but she is young and is still alive. You must take her at once to a house, where I may care for her properly."

They gently picked her up, and, as they did so, a moan escaped her. This roused the elephant, already dazed by what had happened. He began clumsily rising to his feet, watching them as they bore her away, and was evidently determined to follow. Seeing this, Centrepole Tom, who held the light body in his arms, hurried away and almost ran to a small hotel not far distant. He took the Fairy within and laid her on a bed, which they showed him in a rear room on the ground floor.

But Christopher had not lost sight of him, in spite of the crowd; and those without, seeing Christopher's intention of keeping close to his friend, and knowing it was impossible sought to stay him. They shouted to him and tried to drive him back, but he noticed them not

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at all. They threw boxes and chairs in his path, but he tossed them aside. A carriage, which stood in his way, was crushed. Christopher seemed to think that, as his friend was among strangers she was among enemies, and needed his protection.

The situation was desperate. Men counselled shooting him, but how could a pistol-bullet find a vital spot in his enormous body? Besides, he was already maddened by the opposition he had encountered, and further tormenting might lead to dire results. Before anything could be done, before any plan could be matured, he had reached the house.

The door was closed and locked before him and furniture was piled behind it; but, with his massive head lowered, he went straight against it, and everything was crushed before his advance.

Once in the house, he stopped and listened for the sound of her voice. He heard faint moans, and mistook the direction whence they came, for he started straight for the wide staircase leading to an upper floor.

Up he toiled, roaring terribly at intervals. The wooden stairs creaked and groaned under the tremendous weight. The plastering near them began to fall, timbers were sprung and wrenched from their fastenings, and the whole house quivered.

The catastrophe came at last. Just before Christopher reached the top, the whole staircase came down with a frightful crash, and the gigantic animal fell headlong to the floor, which he crushed and splintered. A mighty groan escaped him, for the fall had done him a desperate hurt.

He struggled and floundered in the mass of wrecked timbers, and finally, after a supreme attempt, he staggered to his feet.

With a stupendous effort he steadied himself on his tottering legs, and dazed and shattered, began anew his search for Fairy. But he did not to have to go any farther; Centrepole Tom, followed by the physician, came forward bearing a small, dainty burden in his arms, which he laid gently on a table close to Christopher.

"It will quiet him," explained Centrepole Tom to the few people who had ventured near, "and nothing can hurt her now."

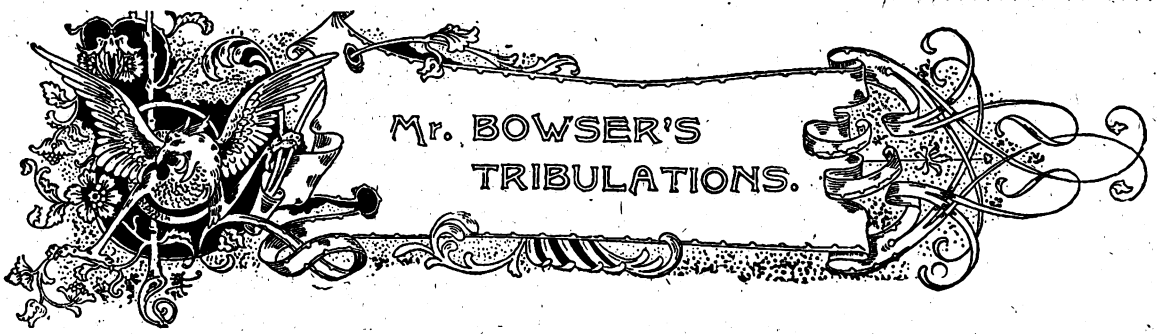
Christopher gazed at her and his head sank lower and lower. The fury had all left him, and crushed both in spirit and body, he stood a towering, tottering wreck. Not a sound escaped him. His great body heaved painfully with his slow breathing and swayed from side to side.

A little later he sank to his knees and then lay down, and with a groan he died.

On the western slope of the cemetery stands a granite monument, marking a very large grave and a small one, and it bears only this simple line:

"Christopher and the Fairy."

E. I. C.



He Goes Forth to Hunt the Festive Snipe.

"And now what is it?" asked Mrs. Bowser as Mr. Bowser came home the other evening with a gun case under his arm.

"Nothing but a little healthful recreation to-morrow," he replied as he carefully stood the case in the corner.

"Have you got a gun in there?"

"I have. It's a gun I borrowed to go snipe shooting with Green to-morrow. Have you any objections to my taking a day off?"

"Of course not, but it seems strange that you should go shooting. I didn't suppose that you had ever fired a gun in your life."

"No? Well, when I bring home a bushel of snipe to-morrow night you'll suppose something else."

Nothing more was said until after dinner, and then Mrs. Bowser queried:

"Where do you go after snipe?"

"Oh, down the marshes," he replied.

"But what is a snipe?"

"A snipe? Do you mean to tell me that you have lived to be forty years old and don't know what a snipe is? That's the way with women, however. They are so busy reading novels and gadding about, that they don't know a goose from a blackbird. A snipe, as I will inform you, is a bird."

"What kind of a bird?"

"Well, it's neither a buzzazd nor a blackbird. It's—it's a snipe. It flies over marshes and is good eating. Snipe on toast is a dish for a king."

Mr. Bowser talked very confidently, but he had never seen a snipe, alive or dead. He had read of them, and Green had added enough to make him enthusiastic. Mrs. Bowser wanted to know lots of other things about the birds, but he choked her off in time to save his reputation. He got to bed early, so as to be able to make an early start, but his dreams were snipe haunted.

At midnight he yelled out and almost rolled out of bed; at two o'clock he got up to look out of the window and listen for the notes of birds; at four o'clock he was up to look at the weather, and at six he dressed and went downstairs to load his gun. Green was to be round at seven, and Mr. Bowser had bolted breakfast and was waiting at the gate before that hour, but it was to be disappointed. His friend had some important business crop up and couldn't go.

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"Then you'll call it off, of course?" said Mrs. Bowser, as she was told of the situation.

"Not at all," he replied. "I have made all arrangements this day to go after the snipe, and I shall go just the same. I'm off in ten minutes."

"But I wish you wouldn't," she pleaded. "You don't know anything about snipe shooting, and you'll be sure——"

"That'll do!" interrupted Mr. Bowser. "I go forth to shoot the snipe, and I'll come home with a basketful. I'm not going to be embraced by a boa constrictor or eaten by an alligator. Nothing will happen except that we'll have a snipe on toast for breakfast—fat, juicy snipe."

"And nothing can induce you to stay at home till some day when Mr. Green can go?"

"Nothing on this earth. The snipe must understand that I'm a man who doesn't let go when I've got my mind made up. You'd better keep dinner an hour for me, as I may be a little late."

With that he was off with the gun on his shoulder and three small boys and a dog trailing behind. At the corner his retinue left him, however, and he took a train for the country. He wanted to come up with the snipe as soon as possible, and so he asked information of the guard.

The guard wanted to be agreeable and aid in building up the suburban line, and so he replied that the snipe were so thick just beyond the terminus that farmers were killing them with sticks. He told of one case where so many of the birds roosted on a fence one night as to level forty rods of it, and of another where their flight darkened the sun for an hour and sent the barnyard fowls to their roosts.

Mr. Bowser caught his breath and felt sorry for poor Green, and he caught it again and chuckled as he pictured Mrs. Bowser's chagrin when he arrived home with a waggonload of birds. He set off bravely and at last struck a marsh. He looked warily about him for snipe, but realised after a minute that a bird of brains would be hidden away where the grass was highest and thickest.

There was water in the marsh. There were also all sorts of flies and gnats, and as Mr. Bowser ploughed along they settled on him like a dog on a bone and began to bite. His shoes were full of water, and half the brim of his straw hat was missing before he got through the marsh, and the biggest thing he had scared up was a bumble-bee. On the farther side of the marsh he came across a farmer in a potato field, and he approached him to say:

"I'm out after snipe, but I don't think I've struck the right spot. They live in the marshes, don't they?"

"They do," replied the farmer as he straightened up to rest his back. "Yes, the wretched things do live in the marshes and keep up such a chatterin' that you sometimes can't hear yourself think."

"But I don't see any about."

"That's because they've gone over to that marsh at the west. They allus go about this time of day to feed. You jest go over there if you want to find 'em by the million."

Mr. Bowser's lost exultation returned to him, and there was a song in his heart as he climbed the fence and fell in and out of a ditch and made his way into the larger marsh. He splashed his way through water and toiled along over beds of dry grass with all the instincts of a hunter on the alert, but nothing appeared.

Something was about to appear, he felt sure, when an enormous frog that was lurking in a damp spot jumped against him with a smash and at the same instant a wandering horsefly which he fancied was as big as a robin crashed against his ear and tried to bite it all off at once. When Mr. Bowser finally emerged from that marsh, it was to come again upon the same old farmer in his potato field. He had tramped for two hours in a circle.

"Didn't git any, eh?" queried the farmer as he leant on his hoe. "I was thinkin' after you'd gone that I ought to have sent you over this way. That's where the snipe all appear to git about this time of day."

"I was told that there were plenty this season," said Mr. Bowser, as hope rekindled again.

"Millions of 'em, but they don't allus stay in one place. Try this other marsh."

There was more water in this marsh, also more gnats and horseflies, but Mr. Bowser plunged in with a stout heart and looked upon a fall in the ditch or a tumble into the grass as all in the day's work. It was only after he had tumbled along for an hour without raising a bird and had come out on the old farmer for the third time that his anger rose, and he yelled out:

"Look here, you silly old idiot! I am back again!"

"So you are!" replied the toiler. "Why, you must be lopsided to walk in a circle this way!"

"You've been misleading me! I came down here after snipe."

"Yes, you said so."

"And I've waded about for five long hours and not seen a single one."

"Shoo! shoo!"

"And I don't believe there's one in the district."

"Shoo! Haven't seen a snipe, eh? That's singular?"

"How is it singular? If there are snipe here, why haven't I seen 'em?"

"I dunno, unless they've all crawled into a holler log to git out of the sun. I've heard that they do that when it's very hot. Yes, that must be it, but if you'll stay about a bit longer, you'll find 'em all flyin' and waitin' to be shot!"

The train which conveyed Mr. Bowser from the snipe grounds to the town also conveyed a cross-eyed man, who sat on the opposite seat and quoted poetry. It was poetry relating to sunburns, fly bites and snipe shooting. There were forty verses, and the end of every verse left the hunter in a ditch or on his nose in the grass.

The passengers applauded at the right places, and Mr. Bowser bobbed about on his seat and vowed that he would hunt that cross-eyed man to his doom. Dinner had waited two hours when he arrived home. He wobbled as he walked.

When he finally reached his own gate, he saw Mrs. Bowser and the cat on the steps, and he halted a moment to brace himself for the ordeal. As he braced, Mrs. Bowser called out:

"Nothing for you this evening!"

He stared at her and wondered what she meant, and she continued:

"I have neither cold food nor money for you."

He opened the gate and advanced, and she rose up and said:

"If you come in here, I will call a policeman to arrest you! Go on, you bad man!"

Nimrod Bowser was being taken for a tramp by his own wife! M. Quad.

[**Next week: He offers up his life in the interests of medical science.**]

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Juan Castrillo's Vengeance.

A Story of Spanish Love and Hatred.

A SUCCESSFUL bull-fighter is almost a national hero in Spain, and gets more run after and fawned upon by all classes of the population than a successful policitian, or even a successful jockey with us. Juan Castrillo was far and away the most famous bull-fighter of his generation, and his fame lasted all through the long years of his retirement, and even after his death until this day. Talk to any Spaniard of him and his eyes will glisten, as he answers: "You mean the old espada, who, they say, used to kill the bull in its first rush in the ring—as if anyone could do that! But he was a wonderful bull-fighter, and we have no one like him to-day."

Juan Castrillo was the son of a peasant in the south of Spain, who occupied himself in breeding bulls for the ring. His mother wanted the boy to become a priest, for he was quick and intelligent and had quite a taste for book learning. But his father needed his help in looking after the bulls. All day long he would sit on his pony in charge of them. If they strayed too far, he had to canter off and bring them back. When they remained quiet, he would take his books out of his pocket and continue his studies.

He was not long in finding out that every bull has an individual character, and that an acquaintance with it makes the animal easier to manage. He found that bulls were just like men, only simpler and kinder; some were good-tempered and honest, others were sulky and cunning. There was a black one, which was wild and hot-tempered, but at bottom, good, while there was one with light horns and flanks, which could never be trusted. It was cunning and suspicious, and never made friends with any of the other bulls; it would always eat by itself, far away from the others. But it had plenty of courage, as Juan soon found out.

One day, his father and sisters came back from a bull-fight at Cadiz in a great state of excitement, saying that a matador had been killed by one of their own bulls. Juan exclaimed: "I know, it was the one with the white horns;" and his father seemed surprised, and said: "The boy is right, he knows more about the bulls than I do."

Juan's knowledge of the habits and character of bulls went on increasing. He was very happy during those years, and his only sorrow was that he was never allowed to see a bull-fight, but when he found out that it was his mother who did not wish it, he ceased to ask to go, and said nothing, for he loved her dearly.

Then came a crushing sorrow. His mother caught cold and died. He thought he should die too. Within a few months his father married again, as he said he must have someone to look after the house, but Juan did not get on well with his step-mother, and it seemed as if all happiness had passed out of his life.

The different order of things, however, enabled the boy to realise his heart's wish, and attend a bull-fight. The banderilleros, whose business it is to stick darts into the bull in order to infuriate him, fascinated the boy at once. His knowledge of bulls made him a good critic, and he felt he could do it as well, if not better than they. Indeed, one of them made a mistake. He did not seem to know out of which eye the bull was looking at him, so he got frightened and did not plant his banderilla fairly.

But what excited Juan most was the appearance of the espada, whose business it was to give the bull its finishing stroke. When the bull, struck to the heart, fell prone on its knees, and the blood gushed from his nose and mouth, Juan cheered and cheered till he was hoarse. But he still remained a stern critic, and presently he saw that one matador had made a mistake. At first Juan doubted his judgment, but the events soon showed that he was right, for the matador had not got the bull to stand square before he tried his stroke.

When a bull stands with one hoof in front of the other, its shoulder-blades almost meet, as when a man throws his arms back and his chest out. This makes it very much more difficult for the matador to strike straight between the shoulder-blades. At best, the point to be struck is a small one, and, if it be narrowed ever so little, the task is thereby rendered much more difficult.

Therefore, when Juan saw the bull was not standing quite square, he knew the matador was either a bungler, or else very clever and strong indeed. In a moment he proved himself a bungler, for his sword turned on the shoulder-blade, and the bull, throwing up its head, almost caught him on its horns.

Then Juan hissed, and cried "shame," and the people stared at him, but the man had to make five attempts before he succeeded in killing the bull, and by that time the crowd had come to the conclusion that the boyish critic was right.

From that day forth Juan determined that one day he would be an espada, but when he mentioned it to his father, he laughed at him, and said he would have to

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grow a great deal, and develop very much muscle before he was any use in that line.

"No, no!" he said, "it is not everybody that can become a matador. A good matador is born, not made. He is the idol of the people, and can earn a small fortune in a single day."

Next day the boy began to practise with his father's bulls. First, he teased one till it grew angry and rushed at him; then he stepped aside. He began to try to move aside as late as possible, and only just so far as needful; for he soon found out the play of horn of every bull in the flock. Another day he played at being a banderillero, and found out at once that his knowledge of the animal was all-important, for he always knew on which side to move to avoid the bull's rush.

The matador's work was harder to practise. He had no sword, and besides, the bull he wished to pretend to kill was not tired, and wouldn't keep quiet. However, he provided himself with a makeshift red capa, and got a bull far away from the others. Then he played with it until it was tired out. Then he approached it with the capa, and found he could make it do what he pleased, stand crooked or square in a moment, ust as he liked. For he learnt at once that, as a rule, the bull rushes at the capa, and not at the man who holds it, though some bulls are clever enough to charge the man.

He kept up this game for weeks, until one day his father expressed his surprise at the thin and wretched appearance of the bulls. No wonder, as the pasture-ground had been a ring for them and him for many a week. After this, he had to play matador without first tiring the bulls, and it was in this way that he learnt the tricks of the ring which made him for ever famous.

He got to dislike his step-mother more and more and his life at home became ever more intolerable. When he was nineteen, he told his father he intended to go to Madrid and become an espada. His father was loth to lose him, but, seeing he had made up his mind, he let him go, and Juan went to Seville, where he did odd jobs for a few weeks in connection with the bull-ring, such as feeding the bulls, helping to separate them, and so forth, and there he made acquaintance with a man named José Herrero, who had a fair secondary position in the ring.

He was a fine man, strong, tall and handsome, and very popular with the fair sex. Juan confided his ambitions to his new friend, but he said:

"You may do well with the capa, or even as a banderillero, but you'll never go further. You see, to be an espada, as I intend to be, you must have height and strength," and he stretched his fine figure as he spoke.

After a few months Juan made his way to Madrid, and there took work in a blacksmith's shop, with the object of strengthening his muscles. In the following spring, thanks to the good offices of José, he got employed on trial in the bull-ring one Sunday.

He took part in the procession with the rest, but when the bull rushed at him, instead of running away like the rest, he wrapped his capa around him, and just as the bull's horns were touching him he moved aside, not half a pace. The spectators cheered, but José came over to him and whispered:

"You mustn't show off like that. In the first place it's foolish, and you'll only get killed; and, in the second place, you fellows with the capa are there to make the bull run about and tire him out, so that the matador may kill him."

For a time Juan respected this admonition, and ran about with the rest, but when the fourth or sixth bull came in, his excitement got the better of him. It was a good honest bull, he saw that at once. It stood in the

The bull tossed him, and he fell down senseless.

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middle of the ring, excited, but not angry, in spite of the waving of the capas all round it.

As soon as Juan's turn came, he ran forward, nearer to the bull than the others had considered safe, and waved the challenge with his capa. At once it rushed at him, and Juan gave it a long run half round the circle, and ended by stopping and letting it toss the capa, which he held not quite at arm's length from his body. As he did this he turned his back to the bull, and did not look at it, for he knew it would toss the capa and not him.

But the crowd rose and cheered, as if the thing were extraordinary. Then he felt sure he would be engaged, and sure enough he was.

Directly after the performance the Director sent for him, and asked him where he had played before. He said it was his first trial, and the Director remarked that such courage generally came from want of experience. But the Duke of Sidonia, a great patron of the bull-ring, who was present, asked Juan why he kept his back turned to the bull.

Juan replied that it was because he saw the bull was an honest one, and not angry, and that he knew it would toss the capa without paying any attention to him.

"Well," said the Duke, "if you know that much, and are not afraid to risk your life on your knowledge, you will go far."

And Juan was accordingly engaged for the season, at a salary of £20 a month.

All that summer he worked every Sunday, and grew in favour with the people of Madrid, and the women began to take an interest in him. But he did not become a gay cavalier. He was timid and young. So he went on studying the bulls, learning all he could about the different breeds, and watching them in the ring. He sent home money to his sister and his father, and altogether was happy and hopeful. Every day, all through the winter, he did a spell of work in the blacksmith's shop to strengthen himself.

Next spring he told the Director that he wanted to be a banderillero. He seemed surprised, told Juan he was a favourite with the capa, and had better stick to that for another season at least. But Juan was firm. Then the Director asked him whether he had ever used the banderillas, and where, for he never believed that Juan had not worked in any ring before coming to Madrid. In the end he engaged him at £40 a month, on condition that, if the spectators wished it, he should work now and then with the capa as well.

Juan was as great a success with the banderillas as he had been with the capa. The banderillero has to excite the bull to charge him before he can plant the dart. He does that to make the bull lower its head well, partly so that the bull shall not know when to toss its head up, and partly because he can throw himself aside more easily when the bull is running fairly fast.

Again and again Juan made the bull lower its head, then walked up to it and planted the banderillas, and, as it struck upward, swayed aside just enough to avoid the blow. That was an infinitely more difficult feat than anything he had done before, and gained him much credit with those who understood bull-fighting. But the ignorant herd of spectators preferred his tricks with the capa.

By this time Juan had discovered that he could make the bull do almost anything he chose. And so the season came and went, Juan got more and more intimate with José and often lent him money, because he always spent more than he earned. Juan also sent his sister £10 a month, and his father another £10.

At the beginning of Juan's third season he caught sight of the face of a girl who was looking down at him from the second balcony. He realised at once that it was the face of his dreams, only much more beautiful, and José chaffed him about her, and said they must make her acquaintance and send her a box for the following Sunday.

That day, with the girl's eyes upon him, Juan surpassed himself. He even did something that has never been done before or since by any one else. The first bull was honest and kindly, as Juan saw directly it came in. So when the people called for "El Pequeño" (the little fellow) that was the nick-name they gave him—he took up a capa, and when the bull chased him he stopped suddenly, faced it, and threw the capa round his own shoulders. The bull was within six paces of him before it caught his look, and it began to stop; but before it came to a standstill, its horns were within a foot of him.

The people cheered and cheered, as if they never would stop. Then he looked up at the girl, and she took the red rose from her hair and threw it into the ring towards him, crying:

"Bravo, bravo! little one!"

That very afternoon they met. José brought it about, and they all went to a restaurant. José did all the talking, for Juan was shy and silent. The girl's name was Lola Valdera, and her mother was with her.

As they talked it over afterwards, Juan said to José:

"You are not in love with the girl, are you?"

He laughed, and said, "No."

"In that case," said Juan, "please leave her to me. Of course you could win her if you wanted to. But it makes no difference to you—and to me, all. If I cannot marry her, I shall never marry."

"Dear me, how fast you go," returned José; "but I'd do more than that for you; and besides, I have other fish to fry."

Accordingly Juan trusted his friend, and it did not strike him as strange that he should so often join the little party, which now met together nearly every week. Lola was not in the least bit in love with Juan, but she had no objection to letting herself be adored, and that was the next best thing.

She was a practical young woman, and had evidently contemplated the possibility of marrying him, for she constantly urged him to get on in his profession.

"A man without ambition," she said, "is like a woman without beauty."

She urged him to try and become an espada, but José remarked that it would require height and strength, like his own, and she seemed to be convinced by his reasoning, and to despise Juan somewhat for it. He was somewhat piqued by this, and said to her:

"If you cared for me, I should be the first espada in the world next season. I would do anything for the sake of your love."

"That's what all men say," she replied; "but love does not make a man tall and strong."

"But do you love me?" he asked.

"I like you," she replied, "but as to love—they say that comes after marriage."

"Well, then, will you marry me?"

"Become an espada, and then ask me again," she answered, laughing.

Juan at once applied to be an espada, but the difficulty was that there was no place vacant, and it was only by a direct appeal to the Duke that he obtained a promise of employment in that capacity. There was to be a

special performance in the following July, when royalty would be present, and he should make his first appearance there.

When he told the news to Lola, she only said:

"I am glad, now of course you'll get José to help you."

Juan stared at her.

"Yes," she went on a little impatiently, "he has been trained to the work. He is sure to be able to teach you much."

Juan only laughed to himself, and marvelled at the ignorance of women on matters of sport. His relations with Lola did not seem to improve with the improvement of his position. She took to teasing him about his size, and saying, in his hearing, that she only admired, big, well-built men.

Meanwhile, he obtained every possible success in the ring, but nothing took like his trick with the capa. One Sunday he had done it with six bulls one after the other, and the people cheered and cheered. But the seventh was a bad bull, and of course he did not try it. Afterwards Lola asked him why this was, and he told her, but she taunted him with cowardice, and ever afterwards was constantly bothering him to do the capa trick with every bull.

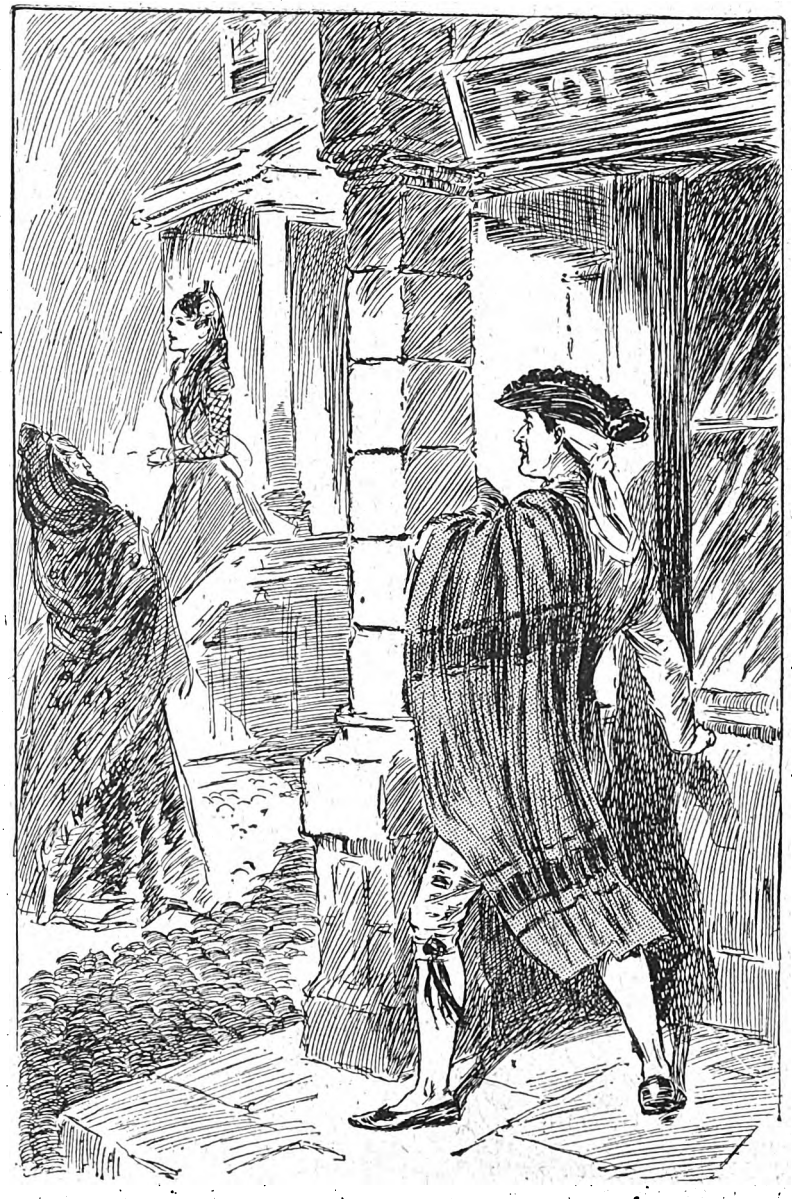
"If you don't," she used to say, "you won't get a chance of being made an espada," and when he laughed and paid no attention, she became more and more obstinate.

"If the people get to know that you can only do it with some bulls," she said, "they won't think much of you. Do it with every bull, and then they can't say anything."

And he laughed and said:

"No, I shouldn't be able to say anything, either."

But she was very angry with him about it.



Presently there came out of José's house a form he knew only too well.

At last, one Sunday came, about six weeks before Juan was to appear as an espada. Lola and her mother occupied the best seats in front. Juan had done the capa trick with three bulls, one after the other, and when the fourth came in, Juan saw that it was a bad bull, cunning and furious.

The other men stood aside to let him do his trick but he ran away like the rest. The people liked him, and so they cheered just the same, thinking he was tired. But suddenly Lola called out:

"The capa round the shoulders. The capa trick."

Juan looked up at her, and she leant over the front of the box and called out the words again.

Then a sort of fury took possession of the bull-fighter. He raised his cap to the girl, and turned and challenged the bull with the capa, and as it put down its head and rushed, he threw the capa round him and stood still. He did not even look at the bull, for he knew it was useless. The bull tossed him and he fell down senseless.

When he came to his first glance was for the girl, and he saw her in the box without any trace of emotion, like an ordinary spectator at an ordinary drama. The bull's horns had torn the

muscles of his thigh from the bone, and he was a month in bed.

The Duke came to see him constantly, and as he was recovering, Juan stipulated that he should still be employed at the show in July. The Duke promised he should if he were able, and then asked him how he came to make such a mistake.

"It was no mistake, señor."

"What! You knew you would be struck?"

Juan nodded. The Duke looked at him for a moment, and then held out his hand without saying a word.

Lola came to see him frequently at first; but when the doctor said he would never be able to appear in the ring again, she came more seldom, and after a week or ten days her visits ceased altogether. At the end of June, Juan sent word to the Duke that he was strong enough to appear, and a few days afterwards his name was placarded prominently all over Madrid, and the Duke had put underneath it: "By special request of H.M. the Queen."

Then Lola came to see him again, and wanted to know all about it.

When the day came, the crowd shouted for the capa trick, and Juan had to limp forward in his espada's dress and go through it. It was an honest bull, and he knew at once that it would be all right. He saw all the people rise in their excitement, and the Duke leant forward in his box. Then, as the bull stopped and the people began to cheer, Juan handed back the capa, and, after bowing went again among the espadas.

Her stare grew wild with surprise and horror, and then she said: "You did it; I see it in your face."

Then the people christened him afresh. He was no longer "El Pequeño" (the little fellow), but "El Cojo" (the lame one), and he had to come out again and again, and the Queen threw him a gold cigarette case. When he left the ring, he left it as the first espada in Spain. So the Duke said, and he knew.

After one more Sunday the sports were over for the year, and then Juan obtained an engagement as first espada for the next season, with a salary of £10,000.

He had resolved never to go near Lola again. But one day José came to him and said she was suffering from his absence.

"She is too proud to tell you so," he said, "but I know that she loves you. And they are poor now, she and her mother, while you are rich and might help them."

This decided Juan to go and see Lola again, and gradually the old relations established themselves once more.

When the next season began, Juan accomplished for the first time his trick of killing the bull immediately after it entered the ring, and before it had been tired at all. From that day forward, the people made an idol of him. He could not walk in the streets without being cheered, and a crowd followed wherever he went and great nobles asked him to their houses.

One day Lola suddenly asked him why he didn't get 'José made an espada. At first he replied that he did not think he was suited to be one, but she insisted so much that at last he consented to go to the Director and ask this favour of him. The Director made all sorts of objections, and only consented when Juan said that if this favour were not granted him, he would give up working altogether.

When José entered the ring for the first time as an espada, he cer-

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tainly looked the part to perfection. Never was there a more splendid figure of a man, and he was radiant in silver and blue. Just before the sports began, Lola drew Juan aside and said:

"You'll see that he succeeds, won't you?" and Juan promised that he would do what he could. So when Juan saw that the bull José ought to kill was vicious, he told off the work to another espada, and so got José an easy bull, which he took good care to get tired out first.

José was not a coward, but he had not the peculiar nerve needed for the business. As it was, he acquitted himself passably; but if Juan had not been there, he would certainly have come to grief.

After the performance José was in the highest spirits, and as pleased as possible with himself.

Lola was very anxious that Juan should use his good offices to get José a permanent engagement. The Director was not at all inclined to agree to this, and spoke of José as rather a bungler, but when Juan defended him and insisted, he at last agreed to engage him for the next four Sundays.

This was better than Juan had anticipated, and he hurried off to tell José the good news. He met Lola's mother coming down the stairs, and thought she semed to signal to someone behind her. She said rather nervously that José was not at home.

"Never mind," said Juan carelessly, "I'll go upstairs to his room and wait."

"No," she said, "you can't do that; José wouldn't like it."

This seemed very strange to Juan, as they had no secrets from one another. But she persisted, and grew strangely hot and excited, and Juan gave way and left the house. But when he had gone half-way down the street, his wonder changed to suspicion, and he reflected that José was evidently not out, and he asked himself who it was that he must not see.

As he stopped to reflect, he saw Lola's mother come out of the house, and he had only time to take refuge in the porch of a shop before she gazed anxiously up and down the street. The porch afforded an admirable opportunity of seeing without being seen, and presently there came out of José's house a form he knew only too well. With stately even step, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, Lola walked down the street with her mother.

Five minutes later José swung out of his doorway in the full costume of an espada.

It was easy to understand what had happened. Lola and her mother had been to see José, and this must mean that the two were to be married. The intimacy between them dated from the time when Juan was laid up and pronounced useless. Lola had never any real affection for Juan, and so she had followed her inclination and tried to win José.

Then, when Juan recovered, José had started a little conspiracy, which had resulted in Juan giving money to the girl's mother and saving José the necessity of helping them. He had also made use of Juan's love for the girl to secure his own advancement in the bull-ring.

Juan ground his teeth and determined that he would turn the tables on the conspirators. He ran after José, and, with an elaborate affectation of heartiness, slapped him on the back, and told him of the engagement he had obtained. José was in the seventh heaven, and went off to trumpet the news from coffee-house to coffee-house

Lola's mother played her part in the comedy.

"Don't you think, Castrillo," she would say, "that Lola is getting pale and thin? It is for love of you, you know. She should marry soon."

This did not amuse him. When the mother tried to play with him, the inconceivable stupidity of his former blind trust became a torture to him. One evening José congratulated Lola on Juan's love for her, and joked about their marriage. Then Juan felt the time had come to drop the curtain and make an end.

He went to his friend the blacksmith and gave him a letter, to be opened in a week. There were three inclosures in it—one for himself, one for the mother of José, and one for the mother of Lola, and each held £600.

As they cheated him for money, he reflected, money they should have—with his contempt.

When Sunday came, José was more nervous than he had been before. As his bull came into the ring he asked hurriedly:

"You'll stand by me, won't you, Castrillo?"

And Juan replied:

"I will stand by you as you have stood by me."

"Yes, of course, we've always been friends," he replied nervously.

"I shall be as true to you as you have been to me," Juan replied, and he moved to his right hand and looked at the bull.

He could not have picked a better. In its eye he saw steady courage and cold rage that would never yield, and he exulted and promised himself revenge. He held the bull's eyes with his own, and as he felt that José had levelled his sword and was on the point of striking, Juan moved his head upwards, and, as he moved so the brave bull moved too.

Then all the ring seemed to swim round him, as he heard the shouts of the people, and saw the crowd rise.

A few hours afterwards he went to see Lola. Her mother met him at the door with tears running down her cheeks. She told him that José was dead, and that Lola had fainted, and been carried home.

Juan pushed his way upstairs, and, when he came into the room where Lola was, he folded his arms, and looked at her.

She rose, and moved slowly back to the wall, and her stare grew wild with surprise and horror, and then she said:

"You did it, I see it in your face."

And his heart throbbed with joy, as he said in the same whisper, imitating her: "Yes, I did it."

She poured forth a torrent of abuse at him.

Then he laughed and said:

"You forget that you made him an espada, not I. It is you who killed him."

But she only groaned and fell face forwards on the floor. Then he went downstairs, and told her mother to attend to her.

Next morning she had a fit and died.

Juan never appeared in the bull-ring again. He had saved some thousands of pounds, and on the interest of this, he lived for many years in quiet retirement in his native village.

When he was on his deathbed, he related the whole story to a friend, who asked him if he did not feel any remorse.

"Remorse? Yes. I feel remorse that I let him be killed by a bull like an honest espada. I ought to have torn his throat out with my own hands."

JOHN CASTLES

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PUTTING DOWN A CARPET.

Mr. Smith has a Troublesome Time.

THERE are times in the life of a man of family when he feels like throwing himself entirely away, never more to be heard from; and one of these trying times is when he has a carpet to lay down, especially if the carpet is too small for the room, and it must be made to fit by stretching, and he has to do the stretching himself.

Smith fell upon trying times one night recently, and from my heart I pitied the poor fellow.

He laid in a supply of tacks, borrowed a hammer from a neighbour, and went to work after supper. The carpet was unrolled, and Smith noticed its shortcomings. He figured up the length and breadth of the room, then of the carpet.

It was nearly nine o'clock before he reached anything like a correct estimate of the fitness of his carpet for his room. His wife added her knowledge of arithmetic to his own scanty store, and between them the problem was solved, and preparations completed to make a 16 by 18 carpet fit a 19 by 20 room.

Smith spread out the woollen plaster in one corner and commenced to tack it down.

The first tack turned over before the hammer reached it, and Smith stuck a smashed finger in his mouth. The tack went home, and then Smith stretched the carpet for another drive.

Finally the carpet was fast in one corner, and then Smith bethought himself to tack it in another corner. Moving a couple of heavy trunks, turning over the washstand and breaking the basin and jug, did not deter him from his purpose.

Smith is a man of most firm resolution. When Smith had worn all the skin off his fingers stretching one side, his wife discovered that the carpet was upside down. The double process of ripping up the carpet and ripping out indignant expressions was here instituted, and now the thing went down right.

The carpet-laying business was going on swimmingly, Smith was hammering away happily, whistling "Down on the carpet you must kneel," the children were playing all sorts of games, the wife was straining her weak back trying to move the wardrobe out of the way, when a message comes from the landlady, saying that, as there was a lady ill in the next room, and company in the parlour underneath, less noise would be highly appreciated.

To comply with her request, Smith tied one of his wife's stockings over the face of the hammer, and attempted to drive home the tacks, but the best stockings his wife ever had (so she said) soon presented the appearance of having been gnawed by hungry rats.

Smith's wife saw how her property was being destroyed, and laid an embargo on the proceeding, accompanied with a threat to lay the shovel on Smith's head. Then he tried a new plan.

He started the tack with his thumb, then hit it lightly with the hammer; then he'd wait awhile, as if for the musical sound to die away before he would give it another lick.

During these intervals Smith mentally calculated how long it would take him to put down the carpet at that rate. He found that it would take him just two weeks, including Sundays.

Here he rested from his labours. He resolved upon a new departure—one good lick to each tack, and his wife to give the rest when the invalid got well.

It was a capital idea, and Smith put it into execution at once, forgetting to let his wife know anything about it until the job was done.

The idea worked well. He got three sides of the room done in no time. But when he went to stretch the carpet, preparatory to nailing it down on the fourth side, the half-driven tacks broke loose from their moorings, and the tortured carpet went adrift.

It was really too bad! Smith sat down on his wife's toilet-set and wept—not because he wished the carpet somewhere else, but because he was tired. The children, bless their dear souls! took in the situation at a glance, and sympathised with their dear papa by turning over the table on his pet corn.

But, as I said before, Smith was a man of firm resolution. He did not howl with pain over the calamity that had befallen his corn, nor give that as an excuse for letting the carpet alone, as many a fond parent would have done under similar circumstances; but he took up an idle razor-strop, and the way he caressed the round places on his eldest boy's body was a sight to see.

Then he went back to his work somewhat recuperated by the diversion. He retacked the broken-loose carpet with two licks to the tack, regardless of noise and invalids. Again the three sides were attached to the floor, and an attempt was made to stretch the fourth into position.

But it wouldn't stretch. The more Smith would pull, the less the carpet would come; and, when he did get it right, the plaguey tack would turn over before he could get his hand on the hammer.

Smith began to get excited. The piano in the parlour beneath struck up "Sweet Violets," and if there is anything in this world that Smith does really despise, it is that. It was enough to drive him crazy; but in the firmness of his resolution he hammered his tacks, mashed his fingers, and smothered his groans in silence.

Just about three o'clock in the morning he got up, stretched his cramped limbs, yawned, and announced the job completed. He laid down and slept an hour.

Then he awoke, and looked at his last night's adventure. The carpet was on the floor—he knew that much; and if the stripes looked like a row of crooked rivers, he didn't care—he had done his best.

It was a bad night's work for Smith. The neighbours called in, and not a soul of them went away without expressing admiration of the way in which the job was done; and beside, they all exacted from Mr. Smith a promise that when they got their new carpet Smith should lay it for them.

I saw Smith the other morning *en route* for the station. He said he was going to Buxton. What a man of his health wants at Buxton is more than I can conjecture.

A. F. S.

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"AS A MAN SOWS."

By HENRY FARMER.

Beware the woman with ruddy hair,
For her hate is red, and she weaveth a snare
That spelleth woe to Malyon's heir.

Extract from a document in the possession the Malyon family.

Author of "Fettered Lives."

PROLOGUE.

It was a night unfit for a dog to be out in!

The storm had arisen suddenly: a dropping of the wind, an ominous silence, then a livid streak of lightning, a crash like volleyed artillery, and a pelting straight downpour of rain.

Gilbert Malyon had lost his way hopelessly. He might be heir to, and only son of, Sir Royle Malyon; but the elements make no distinctions. Had he been the veriest tramp in creation they could not have treated him more scurvily.

He had dismounted from his bicycle. His lamp was burning badly. Save when a flash split the blackness, it was hardly possible to see a yard ahead. The rain had drenched him to the skin.

Three leagues—so the Frenchman had told him at the last inn—to Bonneville, where some luggage awaited him, and he had arranged to meet a newly-made boon companion, a worshipper, like himself, at the shrines of Venus and Bacchus. But he had been pedalling for more than an hour before being overtaken by the storm. He must have gone wrong somewhere.

"I may as well push on as go back!" shivered out Gilbert Malyon with an oath.

He dashed the wet from his eyes, and splashed forward with a savage desperation.

"Confound it!" he muttered presently. "I believe the lamp's going out!"

He stopped to turn up the wick. The flame shot up; then burnt low again.

"Of all the—— Hullo, Heaven be thanked for that!"

A shimmer of light had broken the blackness ahead; but a moment later it was merged in the dazzling glare of a lightning flash. When he glanced blinkingly forward again, the light had vanished.

"A cart or something," he groaned, "gone round a bend of the road. No. There it is again. And it doesn't seem to have shifted."

As he spoke, the light disappeared.

For a third and last time the light flashed and vanished. A momentary sensation of creepiness came over Sir Royle Malyon's son and heir.

When the lightning zigzagged again, he had covered another hundred yards. Ahead of him, a little distance from the roadside, previously screened by a clump of trees, rose up a gabled house, for an instant standing out as clearly defined as in daylight. No light broke the darkness that followed.

Another fork of flame splintered the sky. He was level with a high wall, double gates set within. He groped his way to the gates. They were unlocked. He wheeled his bicycle through.

Away to his right a thin pencil of light struggled out from somewhere. But the intervening darkness was intense. Taking his bicycle lamp from its bracket, he flashed its dying light on the ground, and followed the curving path. He was level with the pencil of light, evidently issuing from a window on the ground floor, when his lamp went out.

He stifled an oath. He would not risk running his head against a wall, or tumbling into shrubs, or breaking his neck down some slope. He would push up to the window, knock, and apologise afterwards for his unorthodox method of introducing himself. Much would be excused a man on such a night. He moved towards the light; then all but fell up a slight slope. Resting his bicycle against it, he groped his way up.

As if enraged at the prospect of losing its victim, the rain pelted down more furiously than ever as he reached the shuttered window from which the light was issuing, and peered through a chink.

"Oh, God!"

The whispered words came chokingly from his white lips as though a hand gripped him by the throat. His eyes were staring wide with horror!

At the head of a table, white with snowy linen, and glittering with glass and plate, half-lay, half-sat a man in evening dress. His head hung loosely over the low-backed chair. The face, with its half-closed eyes, was turned towards the window. On the white shirt-front a red splash, like a star-shaped order—the blood-stained order of the knife!

The door of the room opened.

A woman, cloaked and hooded, entered swiftly, her face invisible to the unseen watcher. She darted to the table, snatched up the lamp, dashed it to the floor. A sheet of flame leapt up, like a red veil.

Then a forked flash of lightning and a deafening peal of thunder as though Heaven had witnessed and clamoured for vengeance!

Malyon reeled away from the window. His tongue was partially loosened. He uttered a choking, helpless cry; then, missing his foothold, pitched forward and rolled down the slope on to the gravel path. Someone was passing through the gates behind him.

As he gathered himself up, a second splintering flash turned darkness into livid light. A woman, moving swiftly, but in that brief fraction of time seeming motionless, confronted Malyon—then darkness again. Only a brief second of light; but every feature of a beautiful, cruel face was branded indelibly on his brain!

Another flash, but not of lightning. A blow from behind had felled him to the ground!

When next the lightning proper illumined the night, the gravel path was deserted, save for a motionless figure lying outstretched, not far away from a bicycle.

Presently a crackling mingled with the splash and rattle of rain. A red tongue of flame leapt out of the gabled house; drew in hissingly; then shot out again to battle the hostile element.

* * * * *

In the great oak-panelled dining-room of Malyon Hall, Sir Royle Malyon sat breakfasting in lonely state.

Sir Royle's hair and moustache might be iron-grey, and the proud, hawk-like face lined and care-worn, but his figure was slim and upright as a young man's. Miles, the white-headed butler of many years' service, noting the bitterness of his master's expression, inwardly wondered if the news that Luke Riordan was back in the village had reached him. His question was answered.

"Miles, if Riordan comes here, he is not to be admitted."

With the words Sir Royle strode over to a bureau and picked up a framed photograph, the likeness of his only

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son and heir. He eyed it half-bitterly, half-contemptuously.

"And one day," muttered the baronet, "he will be master here—perhaps turn the place into a tavern. He's not even inherited the Malyon pluck. And now he's skulking somewhere, Heaven knows where, raising money, I suppose, on his expectations, whilst I have to face the music and do the ignominious work of smothering up his recklessness. Bah! it sickens me! Sometimes I wish——"

He pulled open a drawer of the bureau and placed the photograph within, where it was destined to lie until——

"A cottager's daughter—and the child!" whispered Sir Royle fiercely. Yet there was one thing to be thankful for. His son had not married her! That, in the race-proud aristocrat's eyes, would have been the deeper sin.

Then a shadow fell athwart the open windows. A moment later a man stood on the threshold. A gaunt, tall, big-boned man, his swarthy, rough-bearded face tanned by the sun. The black, frizzly hair, the dark eyes suggested a strain of gipsy blood.

Sir Royle's face went black as a thunder cloud.

"Go!" he said, with a commanding gesture, "before I have you turned out by my servants. How dare you?"

Luke Riordan stepped into the room.

"How dare I?" he answered quietly, but with a fierce flashing of the gipsy eyes. "Well, I do dare, that's all! Ring for your servants? I know better. Your infernal pride will stop you doing that. I might speak out. Not that they don't know. But it pays 'em better to live a lie."

"What is it you want?" said Sir Royle.

The man did not flinch under his withering glance.

"Not your money! I want to know when your son's going to make my sister an honest woman. That's what I want. I've been looking for him myself to put that question to him. I've travelled many a mile since I was last here."

Sir Royle winced. A Malyon marry a cottager's daughter! It was enough to make the dead Malyons turn in their coffins.

"You are going too far!" he answered hoarsely.

"Too far?" said Luke Riordan with the same grim quietness. "How d'ye make that out? Too far! Asking your son to do what's right by the girl he's deceived. Too far? I don't follow you!"

Sir Royle bit his lips.

"Go!" he commanded, "you're like the rest. You helped to set the trap; hoped, through the intrigues of a woman, either to make money or drag yourself up into a better position. Go!"

There was a moment of intense silence. The two men eyed one another. Neither flinched.

"I'm going," said Riordan quietly, though the veins were standing out on his forehead and his eyes seemed on fire; "Nell, a wanton! When she loved and loves him still. When her fault was loving and trusting too much. Hark'ee, Sir Royle, you know where your son is right enough. You may send him this message."

Sir Royle pointed to the open windows.

"Tell him," went on Luke Riordan, "that if it means following him round the world I'm going to find him. And when I've found him—as I shall—I shall stick to him, night and day, and he'll have to come back along with me and marry my sister Nell. He'll have to come——"

He moved towards the windows, then turned round.

"He'll have to come, else, sure as there's a God above us, I'll swing for him!"

* * * * *

Night—a starless night—a year later.

The melancholy hoot of an owl breaks the stillness of Rushford churchyard.

Midway between the lych-gate and the ivy-clad, square turreted church, a little distance from the path, rises up the Malyon vault, grey, grim, and square, the black marble shields upon it bearing the names and honours of those lying within.

Much has happened since, but little more than a year ago, Luke Riordan and Sir Royle Malyon looked each other in the face.

In a quiet corner of the churchyard is a grave, the grass not yet growing upon it, where sleeps Nell Riordan and her babe.

In the distance twinkle out the lights of the "Malyon Arms." The village gossips, foregathered there, are busy with their tongues to-night. Some approve, some disapprove.

"For my own part," quavers out Mat Gummer, the village sexton, "just as that Radical chap what wos 'ere last 'lection time believes in one man, one vote, so I believes in one man, one wife. It's all been mighty quick work, and I should ha' thought they'd 'ave been married elsewhere!"

On the morrow Sir Royle Malyon takes unto himself a second wife. On the morrow the bells will be jangling forth a pæan, and tenants and villagers, in their best attire, will watch Royle lead his bride from the church.

Still a silence over the churchyard, though a strange, mis-shapen figure is creeping over the turf to the new-made grave in the quiet corner. It is a little cripple, with a huge head and a shrunken body and limbs. The handwriting of pain is on the wizened face, the great eyes gleam like glow-lamps.

"A bit daft," they say of him in the village. He strews some flowers on the grave and mutters to himself. Then he steals away, and is lost among the shadows.

After a while, a tap, tap, tap—like some ghostly wood-pecker at work—breaks the stillness!

* * * * *

Happy the bride on whom the sun shines!

Never had a fairer day dawned than Sir Royle Malyon's second wedding day.

The village is all alive and agog. Quaint old men in smock frocks, others in antiquated tall hats and clothes of a bye-gone generation, farmers and their buxom wives, young country fellows, lasses bright with ribbons, line either side of the path leading from the lych-gate to the church door. All eyes are turned towards the church.

The wedding march is pealing out. They are coming from the church.

His head thrown proudly back, his body slim and erect, Sir Royle Malyon looks a younger man than when he last faced Luke Riordan. The sunlight flashes down on the beautiful woman who leans upon his arm. Her massive coils of red-gold hair gleam through the veil like burnished copper.

Mr. Grimwood, following some distance behind with the others, catches a glimpse of the glinting hair, and recalls a doggerel rhyme.

Bride and bridegroom pass along slowly.

Most eyes are on the bride now. Suddenly she stops and clutches her husband's arm. Her eyes are staring over the heads of those who line one side of the path to where the Malyon vault looms up grimly in the background.

Instinctively men and women turn their heads. A chorussed gasp goes up.

Carved in the grey granite, big and deep, are the words:

MURDER WILL OUT.

"As a Man Sows" commences in the Easter Bank Holiday Number of *Pearson's Weekly*, one penny. The above is only a portion of the first instalment, and you can continue reading this absorbing drama of real life by getting *Pearson's Weekly* on March 27th.

THE SAVING OF THE BANK.

A Story of a Girl's Bravery.

THE greatest case of feminine bravery and devotion that ever came under my notice, said my friend, who had been a prominent detective in his day, was that of Margaret Whitley, the daughter of the doorkeeper of the bankers, Messrs. Bangshaw Brothers, in a small Wiltshire town, about the year 1864.

On the eventful night in question, Margaret's father had been sent out of town on business for the firm, and she was the sole occupant of the rooms in which they dwelt, directly over the bank. She had fallen asleep upon a sofa, and was aroused by the sound of stealthily approaching feet over the carpeted stairway, just outside her door.

She rose hurriedly, but somehow never thought of burglars, inasmuch as the little town had enjoyed a singular immunity from such visits for many years. Nevertheless, she hesitated as she took the lighted candle from her work-table and approached the door, for the sounds, if, indeed, she had not imagined them, had suddenly ceased. Then, with a sudden impulse she threw the door wide open.

She had no sooner done so than two masked men suddenly sprang upon her. The light was dashed from her hand, their strong arms held her in a vice-like grip, and before she could utter a cry, a voice whispered:

"Make the slightest sound and you're a dead woman! Do as you are told, and no harm shall befall you."

Margaret Whitley was as brave as steel. She felt the cold muzzle of a pistol pressed against her forehead, and a hundred agitated speculations as to how they had effected an entrance through the carefully secured lower doors surged through her mind, but she accepted the situation at once, and, retaining perfect self-control, she replied, in a low voice:

"Only release me, and tell me what it is I must do."

They released her, after a moment's consultation, and relighted the candle, by which she could see that their faces were covered with black crape veils in which holes were cut for the eyes and mouth; and they seemed shod with some felt-like material that deadened the sound of their footsteps considerably.

One of the men quickly and silently searched the room, while the other stood guard over her. The former presently returned, dangling a bunch of keys.

"Whose keys are these, and what do they open?" was asked the girl, in a low, commanding voice.

"They are my father's keys," said Margaret, "and they open the different rooms and places downstairs."

"Do they open the cellar and the strong-box in which the money is kept?"

"No; one of them opens the door at the top of the cellar stairs. The key of the door at the bottom of the cellar steps, and the key of the strong-box are not upon that bunch."

"Where are those two keys?"

"One pass-key is in the possession of the elder Mr. Bangshaw; the other is in the possession of Mr. Hosea, the cashier. No one can obtain admission to the cellar during their absence."

"Come downstairs with us," said the man holding immediate guard over her.

And clutching her firmly by the wrist, but in other respects acting with perfect politeness towards her, he led her down till they reached the ground-floor of the bank, the second man following closely behind.

As they went down the lower flight, Margaret was surprised to see another figure—that of a woman, who was clothed in a dark mantle from head to foot—who further lighted their progress down with the slender ray of a lantern in her hand.

"Is it not possible," said Margaret's chief captor, when they had reached the foot of the stairs, "that one or other of the pass-keys may be locked in the desk of the private office?"

"It is possible, but not likely," was the calm reply.

At the leader's command, Margaret pointed out the key that opened the door of the private office and the desk at which the Bangshaw Brothers generally sat, one facing the other.

A small jet of gas, commonly used for melting sealing-wax, was then lighted; a bag, containing a number of housebreaking implements, swathed in thick folds of flannel, was next produced; and the desk drawers were speedily forced open and searched. But no key was to be found.

"Five minutes' honest labour lost," muttered the chief robber, turning away with an imprecation. "We must try the persuasive powers of our flannel-clothed friends."

He consulted in whispers with his companions a moment, and then requested Margaret to point out the key that opened the top cellar-door, saying that they would have to burst open the lower one. She indicated the proper key, when he resumed:

"I must compliment you on your sensible conduct in this affair. Now, however, you must excuse me if I am compelled to make you a prisoner for a while. Dear friend, the cord."

The last words were addressed to the masked woman, who up to this time had been a mere looker-on, but who now started into sudden activity. She placed Margaret with her back to a large iron pillar, which supported the ceiling, and then, producing from some hidden pocket a coil of long, thin cord, she proceeded to tie Margaret firmly to the pillar. Her arms were left at liberty till the last, when they were bound together at the wrists

with a band of some strong woven stuff, which held them as securely as if they had been riveted there.

"You see, I would not cause you unnecessary pain," said the courteous burglar, when all was made fast; "and to have fastened your arms down to your sides for a couple of hours would have been the refinement of cruelty. But one point still remains. You must give me your word of honour that you will not cry out, or in any way call for assistance while here; otherwise I shall be under the unpleasant necessity of having you gagged."

"I give you my word," assented the doorkeeper's daughter, after a moment of silent thought, "not to cry out while I remain here."

She began to breathe more freely when they left her to herself, as they now at once did, with no other company than the tiny, faintly-burning gas-jet already mentioned, by which she could just make out the familiar features of the old-fashioned, but richly-furnished private office of the banker brothers.

A few desperate efforts to free herself only served to convince her of their futility. Then she resigned herself to her bonds, and began to think. She knew that, before a single sovereign in the Bangshaw Brothers' strong-box could be touched, the burglars would have to force open two iron doors of immense strength; and knowing but little of the modern improvements in the science of housebreaking, she made no doubt that those doors would prove impregnable to all attempts.

Her chief anguish of thought lay in the impression that the robbers would give up their efforts at daybreak, and leave her release to those who would open the bank at the usual hour—ten o'clock; and eight or ten hours of this sort of imprisonment she was now suffering were terrible to look forward to.

These and other thoughts were still in her head, when the masked woman came gilding noiselessly back into the office, for the purpose of seeing that her prisoner was still safe.

"You have been trying to escape, and find that you cannot," said she, re-adjusting a knot or two. "Take my advice and rest quietly. At such a time as this we do not stick at trifles."

And she again stole out of the office, leaving Margaret wondering who she could be. Many more dreary minutes passed, and her cramped attitude, and the tightness of the cords that bound her, gradually caused her such intense pain that she could scarcely refrain from crying out.

Suddenly, in the midst of her torture, a thought flashed into her brain that left no room for anything else but surprise and delight. There, right before her eyes, was suddenly revealed to her at one glance a sure and speedy mode of escape.

The pillar to which Margaret was tied was within a short yard of the desk that had been broken open; and right upon the edge of this desk was the upright gas-pipe from which sprang the small jet, still burning, of which mention has already been made.

By stretching out her arms, Margaret could hold her wrists directly over the desk, and let the flame burn away the band by which they were bound together.

She knew the terrible scorching pain that it would inevitably cost her, but she did not hesitate an instant. She at once thrust out her hands with a swift movement, and so held them extended, while the jet of bluish flame played on her wrists and the bands that secured them.

She shut her eyes, held her breath, locked her teeth, and her eyebrows came together in a wreathing frown of supreme anguish. Over and round the delicate skin and beating pulse the scorching fire-snake wound and wound, with its searing bite, its excruciating embrace, and presently the encompassing band burst into flame. Even then she did not falter, though it seemed that her very soul would shriek forth from its tenement.

In a few moments—moments that seemed hours—the blazing ligature gave way. Her hands were free, but blackened, blistered, almost cindered, they fell helpless to her sides. Then she gave a great sob, and almost fainted. But the returning knowledge of her peril, and of the great work she had set out to do (her father's retention of his situation in the bank might depend upon it), re-nerved her, and with a great effort she began to pull herself together.

In spite of the pain in her wrist, she began with nimble fingers to loosen one of the knots in the cord by which she was fastened to the post. This offered no great opposition to her efforts; and the first knot loosened, the rest quickly followed. In two or three minutes more Margaret Whitley was free.

She breathed a deep, silent prayer of thanksgiving, though it was some time before she could move her limbs with freedom. The next thing to do was evidently to make her escape from the bank without alarming the thieves in the treasure cellar, if that were possible, and then raise such an alarm as would cause their arrest before they could make off with their booty.

Taking off her shoes, she stole out of the office to the head of the cellar stairs, up which a faint ray of light was shining, and peeped down. Before reaching this point she heard voices—broken, faint, and hollow—issuing from below, with now and then a dull, solid thud, like the muffled blow of some heavy implement.

Now, as she looked down she saw that the door at the foot of the stairs had been forced open, and that the burglars were working upon the great safe itself. One of the men was busy with a flannel-swathed crowbar, which he was using as a lever to pry open one of the safe-doors; the second man was drilling holes in the other door with a very strange-looking implement, the like of which Margaret had never seen before; while the woman was lighting these operations with a lamp, held aloft in one hand. These had their backs to the staircase.

This entire picture Margaret's eyes took in at a glance. They took in one thing more—the bunch of keys with which they had opened the door at the head of the stairs. This bunch of keys was lying on the lower landing, close to the cellar door that had been forced open. Could she but obtain possession of it, she saw not only a way of escape for herself, but a way by which the thieves might be caught in their own trap.

The peril was tremendous! the chance apparently but one in a hundred, of her being able to creep down so softly as not to even cause them to turn a glance in her direction (which, of course, would seal her fate), and then creep back with the keys and close the trap upon them by means of the heavy spring-lock door at the top.

But it was the only course open to her, desperate as it was, and she adopted it with characteristic boldness and fearlessness.

Slowly, inch by inch, and with no more sound than a shadow, she stole into the doorway, and then down the staircase, step by step, counting them one by one by the palpitation of her own heart as she proceeded.

She reached the bottom of the steps, fifteen in all, without causing them to turn and look.

The next difficulty was to pick up the keys, which were threaded on a steel ring, without detection.

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Even this difficulty was conquered at last. She took the keys up from the floor without so much as a rustle, and had proceeded three steps on her perilous upward journey, when a scream from the woman in the cellar, mingled with a shouted command for her to stop, told her that she was discovered, and she fairly flew up the remaining steps.

There was a sharp report of a pistol, and, as Margaret set foot on the topmost step, she felt something strike her near the shoulder-blade. But she staggered forward into the corridor, wheeled quickly round, and flung herself—head, arms, body—against the oaken door, which, yielding to her strength, turned on its well-oiled hinges and, with a little triumphant click, shut up, as in a trap, the three thieves below.

Without the key, this door, which locked of itself when pushed to, could be opened neither from one side nor the other; with the key it could be opened on either side. Hence the necessity for Margaret to obtain, at every risk, the bunch of keys, which, besides several others, contained the particular one belonging to this oaken door.

She had hardly closed it securely, before she heard the two men inside tearing and beating at it like madmen, in their desperate efforts to get out.

She knew they could not do so in a hurry, however; and, as she was now left completely in the dark, she groped her way along the corridor and back into the private office, where the small gas-jet was still burning.

She stood there a minute or two bewildered, not knowing which way to turn next. Then she experienced an odd, numb sensation in her left shoulder, and putting her hand up to it, withdrew it marked with blood.

This was almost more than she could bear, and it was only her strong sense of a duty unfulfilled that kept her from fainting.

Still holding her bunch of keys, she ran out of the office, and down a passage that led to the side entrance of the bank. She was trembling all over now, and had hardly strength enough remaining to unfasten the heavy outer door. At last she flitted out, and sped down the silent street in search of assistance.

Fortunately, upon reaching the first corner she nearly tumbled into the arms of a policeman, who was coming from the opposite direction. What sort of incoherent story she told him she could never afterwards quite remember; but it must have been to the purpose. The policeman at once summoned some comrades to his assistance, and a strong posse of officers reached the bank, and took the burglars into custody.

It turned out that the rascals were none others than a certain so-called Major Woolford, his wife, and his servant, who had some four months previously become the tenants of an empty house that stood next door to the bank. Of course they were subsequently tried, convicted, and sentenced.

As for brave Margaret Whitley, she not only became the heroine of the hour, but more substantial advantages accrued to her and hers through her heroism and devotion.

Her father was considerably advanced in the employment of the bank, and she herself was rewarded so liberally by the grateful Bangshaw Brothers that she was enabled at once to marry an honest fellow who had long loved her, and been loved in return, their mutual poverty having heretofore been the only obstacle to their union

M. W.

Are Women Fully Appreciated.

To the Editor of *Short Stories*:

Dear Sir,—Writing as a woman in this controversy, I think that if, as "A Mere Man" suggests, every woman tried to keep herself "bright, sparkling, cheery and pretty," the sex would be far more deeply appreciated. At the same time "A Mere Man" forgets that women have not the physical strength to bear the common ailments which afflict humanity with the same ease as men. Can their lot be made lighter in this respect? I have proved that it can. Women readers who have tried them will bear me out in the statement that Bile Beans are Nature's greatest remedy for headache, fretfulness, nervousness, that "run down and don't care sensation," and for the other common ailments which go to make the woman in the home cross and unattractive. Bile Beans I have found to so tone up the nerves that one does not get "bothered to death" over household details, and they so improve the system that one's strength is duly renewed, and hard work does not rob one of the pleasure of living. They are not expensive, and if introduced into every home, would, I believe, make the woman of the home more appreciated because they would make her more healthy, more attractive, and more even-tempered.

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WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

The Prize He Won.

How Ned Clifton's Reward Came Too Late.

"I've got no luck," said Ned Clifton, as he watched the crowds on the street below.

It was Easter Eve and snowing.

"I've got no luck," he repeated, looking at the flakes that hovered like moths about the city lamps.

He had not reached thirty years. Below the shabby-genteel standard, an unsuccessful writer, to whom even the gates of Bohemia were all but closed.

"I thought my story I sent to the Easter prize competition would have brought me something, but it was not even available, or it would have been noticed in the list published. I don't blame them. Still, if I only had the postage I inclosed for its return, I could——Oh! What's the use of wishing and thinking!"

He laughed, throwing himself on his bed.

The room grew colder, and the odour from his smoking lamp nauseated him. Going to the window he gathered a handful of snow and ate it.

Restless footsteps on the floor below told him he was waited for by his landlady. He listened in the hall until he heard the door below loudly slam.

"Ah!" he thought. "She has given me up for to-night, poor lady!"

Three days without food had drawn largely on his physical strength, and had nearly exhausted his moral courage.

Waiting a few minutes longer, and hearing no further sound, he went quietly down the steps and left the house, for he knew nor cared not where.

Easter had come early. The snow covered the flower-laden crowds, among whom there were many he had known in happier days, who brushed him without a thought.

He was hungry—so hungry—not for bread alone, but for one gentle word only — only one kind look.

An hour's walk brought him to a street, from which he saw the roof of a building wherein some pigeon-hole or waste basket lay that in which he had placed all his hopes and faith—his manuscript.

"My story—the postage! They might return it to me," he thought in despair, forgetting the lateness of the hour.

He entered the building, and under the blaze of electric lights, was revealed, in every detail, his destitution. Realising his condition, his face flushed, and he rushed out into the streets again.

Shivering, he went on until, attracted by the heat of a grating in a pavement before a large restaurant, he stopped to enjoy, with other street waifs, the warmth, but not the savoury odours, which were to the starving man exquisite torture.

Through swinging doors of a pawnshop opposite he saw the coming and going of an endless human chain. He took from his pocket a miniature, incircled in a well worn frame of gold. He looked at it but for a moment, and, smiling sadly, as if ashamed of his thought, quickly replaced it in his pocket.

The clocks were striking eleven as he started for his room. On the way he found himself in a crowd who were leaving the theatre. Boys in grotesque costume were distributing packages to the men, and he felt one placed in his hand. It was an advertising sample of cigarettes.

"Is it providential, or a case of 'the devil looking after his own,'" he laughed grimly, and hurried on with that acme of enjoyment—anticipation.

Finding his house dark and quiet, he softly crept up to his room, and with a sigh of relief, closed the door.

He carefully took the tobacco from the paper wraps, filled his pipe and lighted it. Ah!

Drawing his chair before the window, he smoked—and dreamt. Dreamt of home, friends and bygone days. Of "youth and hope and that dear time," and—of her!

And then he no longer felt the cold, and the pangs of hunger were stayed.

The moon had not yet risen, the wind had shifted, and through parting clouds brightly shone the stars in Easter skies. The city lights, reflected by the snow, filled the room with a mellow glow.

His tobacco had burnt out, and in attempting to light it again he found only ashes in the bowl.

"Typical of my hopes—dead!" he sighed, wearily replacing it upon the sill.

He sat on the side of his bed, and taking the miniature again from his pocket he held it before him so that the reflected light fell full upon the fair young face. Passing his hand over it as if it were her own face:

"My darling! My darling!" he murmured. "You would care if you could only know."

In an instant his dreams vanished. Destitution, desolation and unmerited neglect deluged his soul. Throwing himself on to the pillow, he shed his manhood's first tears.

After the paroxysm of his grief had passed and his tears had ceased his sobs continued almost until dawn, but at intervals that grew longer and longer until they, too, had ceased. He was sleeping.

"Did you read Clifton's story this morning?" asked the cashier of the editor.

"Yes. Best thing he ever did. It should have been a prize-winner. I hope he got a 'fat' cheque for it, poor chap!" was the reply.

"He did. Clifton sent in his story some weeks ago, but through carelessness or accident it was overlooked. The chief came across it last night and rushed it through for to-day's paper. He sent him a cheque by messenger this morning, with a letter of congratulation, and offered him a position on the reportorial staff. The messenger has just returned with the letter, unclaimed."

"Couldn't find him, eh?" said the editor.

"Oh, yes, they found him!" returned the cashier quietly, as he rolled a cigarette. "They found him with his face buried in a pillow and his lips pressed upon the portrait of a young girl—dead!"

JOSEPH BAUGHER.

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J. H. Schneller, 1412 Avon Street, La Crosse, Wisconsin, writes: "Hypnotism truly reveals the secrets of life and the mysteries of nature. My own father could not have convinced me of its wonderful power if I had not actually tested it for myself. I consider a knowledge of it invaluable to those who wish to get the most out of life; to those who wish to achieve success and live up to the full measures of their possibilities."

Mrs. Effie M. Watson, Martinsville, Ind., writes: "Hypnotism opens the road to health, happiness and prosperity. It should be studied by everyone. I would not part with my knowledge of it for any amount. The instructions have developed within me a force of character, an ability to influence and control people that I did not dream I could acquire."

J. W. Clingen, M.D., Springfield, O., writes: "I have used the methods of hypnotism taught by the American College of Sciences in two cases of difficult surgical operations with perfect success. It is a complete anesthetic, and preferable to chloroform or ether. I acquired a practical knowledge of hypnotism in less than three days. The book is grand."

Rev. T. W. Butler, Ph.D., Idaho City, Idaho, writes: "I have cured a number of chronic cases of rheumatism, dyspepsia and paralysis of long standing; have not had a single failure; I consider a knowledge of Personal Magnetism invaluable. The book has greatly increased my own powers."

Dr W. P. Kennicutt, 520 State Street, Binghamton, N.Y., writes: "I had long suffered from nervous prostration and dyspepsia. My case baffled all medical skill. I studied hypnotism from the American College of Sciences, and tried it upon myself with surprising results. In one week my stomach was better than it had been in thirty years. I could eat anything without the slightest distress, I can hypnotise myself in five minutes and sleep all night; have hypnotised a number of others."

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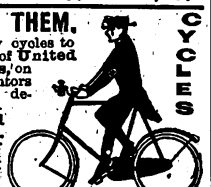

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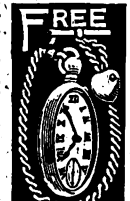

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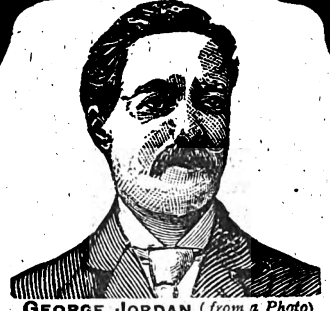

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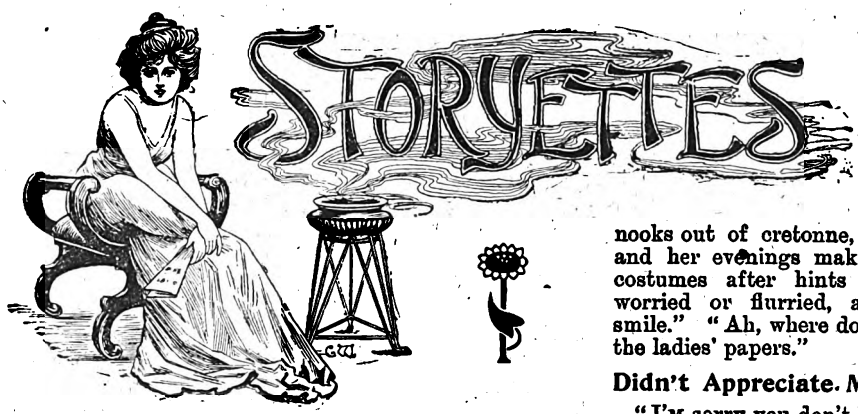

She Couldn't Help It.

Friend: "I wonder, Ethel, that you allowed that Frenchman to kiss you in the conservatory." Ethel: "I couldn't help it." Friend: "Why couldn't you?" Ethel: "Because I can't speak French."

To Give Her Pleasure.

He: "Have you decided what to give your old aunt for a birthday present?" She: "No; but now I come to think of it, the poor old maid has had very little pleasure all her life; you might just write her an anonymous love-letter."

His Expectations.

Angelina: "What did you tell papa about your prospects?" Edwin: "I said I had expectations from my uncle." Angelina: "Why, Edwin, you told me you had no relatives at all." Edwin: "Oh, yes, but I'm going to pawn my watch this evening."

Where the Cathedral Was.

Stranger: "Would you kindly show me the way to the cathedral?" Intelligent Native: "That is not difficult to find. You just walk down that street yonder, and at the further end you will see a public-house on your left. The cathedral is exactly opposite."

Knew He was Courting.

Anxious Mother: "My dear, I'm afraid William is getting into bad company. He is out late every night" Observing Father: "Oh, he's all right. He goes to see some girl or other. Shouldn't wonder if he'd announce his engagement soon." "He hasn't said a word about any young lady." "No; but he's keeping company with one all the same. His right wrist is covered with pin scratches."

Why She Cried

He: "Did you read this horrible story?" She: "No; what is it about?" He: "A married woman got into a rage at the breakfast table and hurled a cup at her husband." She: "I daresay he did something to deserve it. Did she hit him?" He: "I should say she hit him. The cup was shivered to pieces, and one of the fragments struck her husband in the neck, severing the jugular vein, and causing almost instant death. The paper says the shrieks of the unfortunate woman could be heard for streets when she realised the nature of the disaster." She: "No wonder. I daresay the broken cup belonged to her new china set."

An Ideal Woman.

"I know a woman who spends her mornings thinking out recipes that produce the most ravishing dishes from the simplest ingredients, which would otherwise be thrown away; her afternoons making easy-chairs and picturesque nooks out of cretonne, biscuit boxes, and beer barrels; and her evenings making inexpensive but entrancing costumes after hints in the papers. She is never worried or flurried, and her face always wears a smile." "Ah, where does this ideal being live?" "In the ladies' papers."

Didn't Appreciate Music.

"I'm sorry you don't like the new nurse," she said to her husband. "She is so good about singing to baby and keeping him quiet." "Yes," was the calm reply, "but I'd rather hear the baby cry!"

She Didn't Like Cornets.

Jack (to his *fiancée*): "I think of getting a musical instrument, Maud. Say, perhaps a cornet." Maud (in dismay): "Oh, no; not that horrid thing." Jack (in surprise): "And why not, dearest?" Maud (blushing violently): "It makes the lips so hard."

An Irish Experience.

An officer quartered in Dublin was greatly annoyed at his boots being brought to him each morning, by his Irish servant, carefully laced to the top and neatly tied. At last he lost all patience and asked him "what he meant by persistently lacing his boots up every morning before he brought them to him." The man looked astonished and replied, "Shure, sir, I thought I'd save yer honour the trouble of lacing the same."

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 55 to 60.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to Mr. J. E. Priestley, of the Grammar School, Tewkesbury.

A book has been forwarded to:

M. Smith, 18 Barlby Road, Selby; W. O. Hemming, Colet House, Rhyl; R. T. M. Radcliff, Colet House, Rhyl; J. M. Child, 17 Clarence Road, Derby; F. G. Homer, Richmond Villa, Auderton Park Road, Moseley, near Birmingham; Mrs. E. Davis, 4 Castle Street, Barnstaple; Miss A. Munro, The Range, Hightown, Liverpool; D. G. Jelly, 3 Cantwell Road, Plumstead; W. J. Webster, 3 Alford Road, Union Grove, Clapham; F. H. Turner, "Belmont," Addison Road, Upper Caterham.

SOLUTIONS.

55. Grenade, grandee, angered, derange, enraged.

56. PSORA
SOLAR
OLIVE
RAVEN
ARENA

57. Procrastination is the thief of time.

58. A clear, steady blue flame burnt in a golden lamp hanging from the invisible ceiling above her head. At either end of the altar stood a priest in splendid vestments, masked by a veil of white linen suspended from his shaven brows, with two eye-holes edged with black.

59. PLAINTIFF.

60.
D	WAL	E
U	LE	X
R	EPROBAT	E
H	ALIBU	T
A	PPL	E
M	INISTE	R

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IN CONFIDENCE.

- - Conducted by MADGE MORRIS. - -

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

Pity a Poor Adonis!

ARE good-looking men less fortunate in love than others? A correspondent, "G. E. W." has found it so, for, in spite of his known personal attractions, he finds more than one lady has trifled with him in the grossest way. Well, I think a good-looking man who is aware of the fact, is rarely popular with women. When a man is vain his vanity leads him to suppose all the girls must of necessity be attracted towards him. Therefore he seldom finds himself paying them the necessary attentions, and as a result often gets left in the cold where far less attractive men have succeeded.

❦❦❦

Of course, I don't know whether my correspondent is such a man, but fear there are not many exceptions. Women admire good-looking men, but always suspect them of insincerity. They think that a handsome man must be a flirt, knowing the power he can exercise over the sex if he choose; and when one appears on the scene a woman is always inclined to be on her guard. One of the handsomest men of my acquaintance told me quite the same thing some time ago. He knew of his own attractions, but seldom found women drawn towards him.

❦❦❦

I told him what I thought the reason, and perhaps the same will apply to "G. E. W." He was too vain, and even when agreeable to a woman gave an impression of coldness and insincerity, which led them to think of him as "impossible." Consequently, when the crucial moment came, he found to his surprise that someone else had stepped in and ousted him. In successful love-making, the rule of good looks must vary with the sex. A woman who is pretty should know it and live up to it. A man who is handsome should forget it, and be himself.

❦❦❦

When Jack's Afloat.

"ENA" is very fond of a man who is continually abroad. Would it be very wrong of her to flirt in his absence, if she felt inclined to? Yes, "Ena," I think it would be very wrong, even, if you are quite, quite sure that you really love the man who is abroad. But I think many travelling men make a great mistake in expecting their sweethearts to lead recluse lives simply because they are not near. It isn't fair. A girl should enjoy the company of other men, and it would not be a breach of faith, in my opinion, towards their real lover. It would rather tend to keep your faculties well in play against his return, and would be much better than prolonged periods of moping. But don't flirt.

❦❦❦

The absentee lover causes a lot of heart-burnings. Here is "DOWN-HEARTED ONE," who was very fond of a sailor. But when he came back he did not go and see her, and on her writing to ask the reason, he replied he had been told she was married, and had destroyed all her letters and photos. This seems to be only a little misunderstanding. Wait till you get the reply to your letter. He will probably take the earliest opportunity to come and make amends, if he really loves you.

❦❦❦

Loyalty to First Loves—

THE idea that love comes but once a lifetime, and that there is no "second edition" of it, is very general, and its victims include "MIRIAM" (Hartlepool), whose first love has been dead some time, but she has since met another man of whom she is very fond. At the same time, she has an idea that it is her duty to be loyal to the dead lover.

❦❦❦

Well, that is a very lofty and beautiful sentiment, "MIRIAM," and far be it from me to wish to disturb it. If you really felt that no other man in the world was possible for you but the deceased, perhaps you would be right in not marrying another. But you say you are very fond of this other man. Well, if that is so, do not let any imaginary sentiment for the dead prevent your making him and yourself happy. It is possibly only fancy on your part that you do not really love him.

❦❦❦

—And to Calf Love.

SHOULD a youth of nineteen, who is fond of a girl but will not be in a position to marry for years, become engaged, or wait? This troubles "CALF'S LOVE." I advise him not to get engaged. It is a mistake for two very young people to tie themselves down before either really knows their own mind. If you are really fond of each other, you will be able to wait a year or so, until at any rate "CALF'S LOVE" has some idea of his prospects, when he will be right in making his proposal.

❦❦❦

The Girl Away from Home.

"E. L." tells me that she is eighteen years of age, is away from home in a good situation, and living with a married brother. She wants to know whether it would be right for her parents to force her to go back home so long as she is doing better where she is. This is not a very easy question to answer, "E. L.," because you have told me so little.

❦❦❦

It depends so much upon what claim your parents have on you. If they were ill, or could for any reason not well spare you, it would, of course, be your duty to return to them. But, on the other hand, if their wish to have you is purely a selfish one, I should say, stay where you are by all means.

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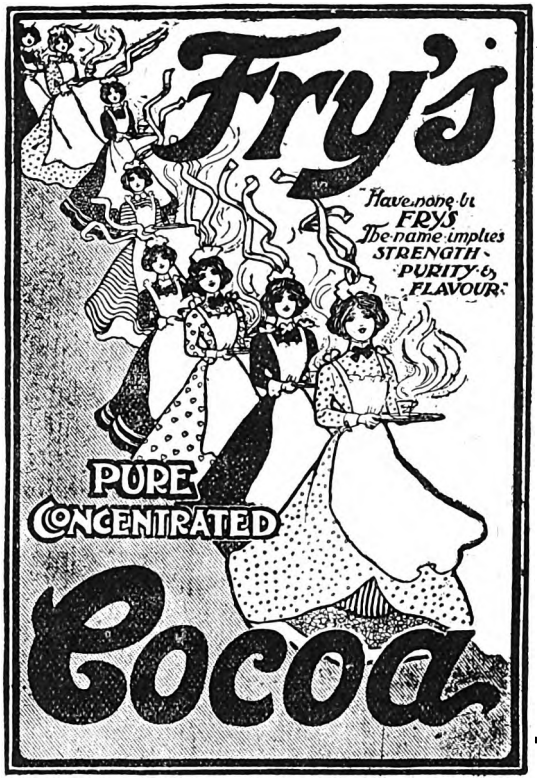

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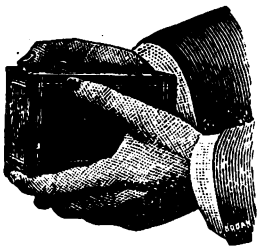

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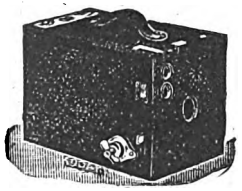

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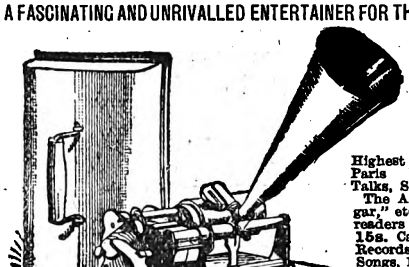

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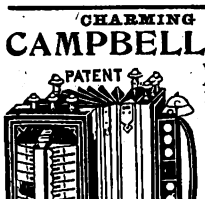

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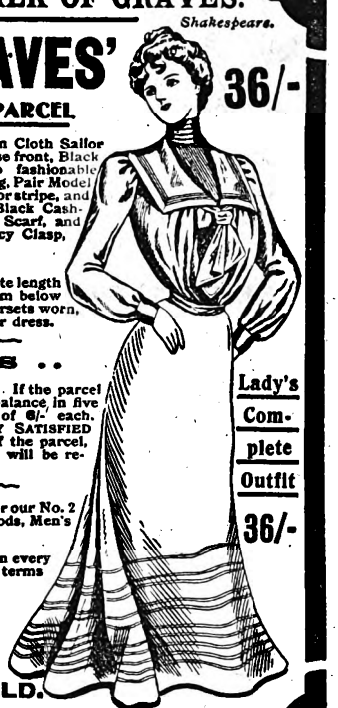

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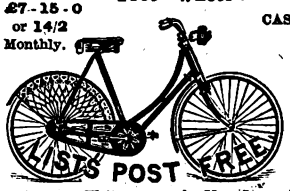

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Short Stories

No. 692.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending April 5th, 1902.

Luck of a Lover.

A Charming Romance of the Welsh Coast.

By R. Norman Silver.

CHAPTER I.
What the Sea Held.

"But, my dear child, you can't spend the rest of your days in this wilderness just because old Neptune chose to fling you ashore here eighteen years ago. Olwen sweetheart, little woman, you must say 'Yes'—you must indeed."

The girl addressed did not avail herself of the pathetic pause which gave her an opportunity of replying. Her small strong palm lay on the wooden bar of the rough wicket that closed the path to the singled-storeyed stone cottage at her back, her fingers were alternately contracting and relaxing in a nervous indecision.

She was a true Welshwoman, fair-skinned, grey-eyed, with tresses of dazzling gold—not the pale gold of the Saxon blonde, but the red gold which glistens when the light catches it, like spun threads of the metal itself. Of medium height, her slender figure made her seem taller than she was, and her slightly abbreviated skirts revealed a foot and ankle as delicate as they were vigorous.

"It isn't as if I wanted to whisk you off immediately," grumbled her petitioner, "of course I understand that your fostermother must be thought of. But she is failing fast, and soon you will be left alone. Will you not let me come for you then, Olwen?"

Olwen Griffiths gazed tremulously into the dull April sky at the end of the short street, whose scattered dwellings ran down towards the beach and ebbing tide. From either point of the tiny haven below swept off the picturesque, if somewhat flat, western coast of the Lleyn peninsula, the southern projection of Carnarvonshire. Against the sullen horizon beyond, there rose the distant profile of Anglesey, that remote island corner of Wales, across which the mail trains plunge to Holyhead. Between, the waters of Carnarvon Bay slept under the late noon.

A sigh broke suddenly from the girl's lips.

"If I could only be certain that I am the right kind of a wife for you!" she murmured, "I am no better than the daughter of a working-man and you are a gentleman with your way to make in the world. What if I were to be a hindrance instead of a help to you!" The speaker's English was musical and correct, though touched with a suspicion of her native accent.

The other drew to his side the fishing-reel that was slung behind him, tossed into it the frame and sea-line, with whose hooks and sinkers he had been trifling, and seized the reluctant hands of Olwen Griffiths.

"I am the one possible judge of that," he answered. "Even when I am able to offer you a home and a living I shall still be far from becoming rich. My father was foolish enough, dear, to bring me up an honest man and to have me trained as a mining engineer. It's an overcrowded profession, Olwen, and the only room in it for the scrupulous is at the top of the tree—a tree that takes a lot of climbing. So that for a considerable part of his life I expect Edmund Anderson, M.I.C.E., will have to be devoutly thankful for such a thrifty little partner as yourself."

He was very much in earnest, was Edmund Anderson, as he leant, a robust young Englishman, upon the wicket that separated Olwen Griffiths and himself. His sallow complexion—sallow even under its tan—suggested that he had experienced some of the disadvantages of the tropics.

"Won't you confess at least that you care for me, Olwen?" he begged. "Don't be cruel, dear!—my stay at Porth Dinas is nearly ended, your sea-breezes have

driven the last vestiges of malaria from my constitution, and I must be on the track of some more profitable occupation than that of pulling together Sir David Ellis' one-horse granite quarry. Shattered by fever and out of harness, I snapped at the job when it presented itself, and, as a consequence, met you, you wonderful little Welshwoman. But I mustn't stop too long out of the busy world or I shall be forgotten. When I go darling, let me take your promise with me—it will bring me luck."

The engineer tried to scan the face of his companion, but Olwen had averted it.

"Have you never heard of the lover's luck?" pursued Edmund Anderson, endeavouring to control the desperate anxiety with which he was awaiting yet seeking to postpone, her all-important decision. "Out in Brazil—I was copper-mining there a year or two ago—we had a fellow who used to sing a rousing song about it. I always remember the words of the chorus—they were the best part of the song:

"What though the wooer's hot head there should cover
A crown of gold or a fustian cap,
The luck of a lover, the wide world over,
Is the best from Fortune's lap."

Olwen laughed nervously and released her tremulous hands, he strove vainly to retain them in his own.

"I—I suppose I can't stop your being my—my lover," she faltered, "so you should get the luck in any case. But, oh!" she interrupted herself, "ought I to let you marry someone without even a name of their own? I'm not Olwen Griffiths, I don't know who I am, only that I'm Welsh."

"Yes, by Jove!" exclaimed Edmund Anderson, "and how do you know that? To look at, no doubt, you're as Welsh as Snowdon. But it may be an optical illusion!"

"Oh, no!" said Olwen, "I don't expect I was born in Wales, but that doesn't prevent my being Welsh! And when they brought me round on that terrible night, after mother and I had been dragged out of the water down in the Bay yonder, I began to cry and call for *mam bach*, which means, in Welsh, 'mother dear.' I couldn't have been more than twelvemonths old then, and it is all I could say. But it showed I was Welsh and that was why the Griffithses kept me when they found that mother was dead."

"You are convinced that the poor creature was your mother," remarked the engineer, "a lawyer would object that there was no proof of it—she might have been just a nurse or servant."

"She must have been my mother," answered Olwen, "she had grey eyes, they say, and hair like mine. And she was holding me so tightly that they had to force her arms open. She had been beaten fearfully on the rocks before they could get hold of us, but she managed to shield me—she must have been my mother to think only of that. But who she was, or who I am, and what we were doing on that big steamer from South America, I don't believe I shall ever learn."

"My dear little woman!" declared Edmund Anderson, "you don't imagine that matters an iota. Welsh or Scotch, English or Irish—you are you, and it is you I want to marry. Olwen, my darling, I have been very happy at Porth Dinas, I owe it the one love of my life. But I'm saying farewell to it next week—a month ago I gave Sir David formal notice, another day or two and I shall be back in London."

"O—h—h!" It was a piteous exclamation, half-moan, half-protest, and it was wrung, as if involuntarily, from Olwen Griffiths.

"You will say 'Yes' before I go, dear, won't you?" pleaded the engineer, "don't deny your own heart, don't send me away a lonely, disappointed man. Life can be very bitter when, instead of hope, one has merely the realisation of what might have been."

Edmund Anderson's tone quivered with that inexpressible regret which no woman can bear to hear in the voice of the man she loves. Olwen retreated a step or two up the narrow path.

"I must think," she stammered, "I must be sure what I ought to do—I will tell you to-morrow."

The engineer drew a deep breath.

"You are a strange girl, Olwen," he said, "you love me, you know you love me, yet you keep me in torture for another day. Very well, it is your right, I will go."

He looked at her searchingly, lifted his soft cap, and moved off down the street in the direction of the beach. Porth Dinas was busy with its Saturday afternoon marketing, the sun, veiled by fleecy clouds, still showed high in the west, the ebbing tide sounded monotonously on the flat reefs that, draped by olive-coloured weed, ran far out under the sucking water.

Olwen gazed after her lover from the threshold of the cottage, then brushed away the sudden tears that had

"Won't you confess at least you care for me, Olwen?"

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blinded her and went in, the slanting sunbeams kissing her warm tresses as they vanished at the severely plain entrance.

Edmund Anderson, his brows knitted, his pulses beating rebelliously, gained the belt of shingle that bordered the tiny haven and flung himself down, to ponder the situation.

Three months before, he, Edmund Anderson, mining engineer, home from Brazil, enfeebled by malaria fever, and impoverished by the collapse of a bubble company, had met, in London, Sir David Ellis, a certain eccentric Welsh Baronet, had accepted a casual invitation to spend a few days at the latter's place in Carnarvonshire, and ended by drifting into the business management of a small granite quarry which formed the baronet's principal source of income.

It was thus that he had encountered Olwen Griffiths. The young engineer, too discreet to remain under his employer's roof as intimate and servant, had provided himself with a modest lodging in the chief street of Porth Dinas. He found himself, in this way, under the same roof with Olwen Griffiths and her widowed fostermother.

Olwen Griffiths—as she had declared—was strictly entitled to neither name. She was one of the few survivors of a disastrous wreck, in which, eighteen years before, there had gone to pieces, upon these olive-brown reefs, a long, low cargo-steamer, the *San Giacinto* from Monte Video to Liverpool. Driven out of her course by a terrific gale, the *San Giacinto* had been jammed on the rocky shore of Porth Dinas Haven, and only a rough sailor or two, and a baby in the arms of a dead woman had been rescued from the tempestuous waves.

That child was now Olwen Griffiths. Adopted by her deliverer, the then overseer of the Porth Dinas quarry, she had grown into womanhood to become the gentle supporter of his widow's declining age. At nineteen she was a rare type of Welsh beauty, but graver, prouder, colder, than her girlish rivals.

Edmund Anderson's love for her was as ardent as it was honourable, nor had Olwen been able to disguise the fact that she returned it. She would have been difficult to please had she not done so. The engineer was clever, travelled, merry, sincere, and not without his share of good-looks. Not in the least egotistical, he had never contemplated the possibility of Olwen refusing him on the ground that she, a Welsh working-girl, was no match for a man in his sphere. Yet that was what she had chosen to do, not once or twice. A less courageous man than Edmund Anderson would have been defeated a month earlier, while the engineer was merely expecting the result of his fifth or sixth proposal.

"Hullo!" said a voice near the musing and melancholy lover, and a footfall grated on the shingle at his elbow, "resting after your labours! Any sport?"

Edmund Anderson glanced up. Close to him stood a tall and stooping figure—the figure of an old but extremely well-preserved man. His costume was by no means of the newest fashion, yet had a kind of easy elegance about it, and suggested, together with his drooping shoulders, rather the student, than the invalid, his skin was withered and of the tint of antique parchment.

"Good afternoon, Sir David," replied the engineer, rising, and hastily drawing his line and frame from the basket at his side, "I was on the point of trying my luck. You wakened me from a reverie."

He got out a bait-can as he spoke and started to prepare his hooks.

The baronet's features wrinkled into a grim smile.

"Beware of reveries," he answered, "they are only for the studious, such as I. In a man of action they betoken ill-health—or—love."

"Thanks for the warning," said Edmund Anderson, trying to utter the words lightly, and baiting a hook with much care, "but you are out for your walk rather early are you not?"

"Yes, yes!" admitted the other, "I had a great find to-day, Anderson, and lunched prematurely, in triumph. I have been pursuing my investigations into the Ellis coat-of-arms and have established the connection between the dragon of the Caradoc Ellises crest, and that of the Howell Ellises. Dinas Castle was built by a Howell Ellis—I am the first of the Caradoc Ellises to reign here; the old stock died out ten years ago. Our dragon has wings, theirs had not."

The gleam of enthusiasm sprang up into the baronet's lean visage and he rubbed his hands.

"Well, to-day," he said, "I discovered an ancient drawing of the Howell coat-of-arms in which their dragon has wings, too. So the crests are one and the same. The Howell Ellises must have dropped the wings for the sake of distinction. It is an interesting point in heraldry. Good-day to you, Anderson, I must get back to work."

The baronet stalked on, his head bowed, his fingers interlaced behind him. The engineer gathered up the baited line and strolled down across the reefs that were fast being bared by the retreating tide.

"Singular," he murmured, "that a man should consent to live for no better purpose than to pry into forgotten coats-of-arms and find out when and why they were invented. However, each of us has his hobby."

With which conclusion he whirled his line and tossed it into the run of the tide. The afternoon was increasingly dull, both water and weather were propitious, his line thrilled significantly, almost before the single soft plash of the sinker had died away. He hauled it in—something silvery flapped and twitched at the extremity, an active two pound codling.

Edmund Anderson readjusted the bait and tossed the line in again. A moment passed and there was another bite—the codling were going out with the fringe of the tide, snapping at all they saw—he pulled in, and possessed himself of, not one but two more silvery bodies.

This done, he baited the hooks afresh and threw the line back. His success, however, threatened to be as brief as it had been sudden the next quarter of an hour slipped away without bringing him a fourth fish. He hauled in his line, thinking to ascertain if the bait had been sucked off by some wily denizen of the deep. It resisted strongly, he humoured it dexterously, and pulled once again—without success, it had evidently caught somewhere.

"Oh, very well," he muttered irritably, "I can't stay here all afternoon—it must break, if it chooses to." And he drew on it powerfully. It yielded and he coiled it down as it came in hand over hand.

Something glittered on one of the hooks—not silvery this time but golden. He reached to it, puzzled. It was a tiny gold pendant, rather oblong than square, and fairly substantial in manufacture. From a ring and eyelet upon it hung two loose ends of chain. And both chain and pendant were worn to an oddly rounded smoothness, as though by the long-continued action of water. Yet, still clinging to their solid setting, there

shone, on one side of the ornament, a couple of initials in minute diamonds—the letters M and E.

The engineer noticed a vague indentation on the edge of the curious charm, and forced his thumb-nail into it. The pendant gaped upon a hinge; it had been closed over a bevel and the interior was quiet dry. Exposed was a flattish plate, with a slit in it, and a bit of white silk ribbon projecting.

Edmund Anderson pulled at the latter; the ribbon unrolled, as does a surveyor's inch tape from its case. It was a finger's length deep and about half as wide. Its surface was most delicately painted in a style between that of the illuminator and the miniature-artist, and contained a pair of oval portraits, backed by a piece of remarkable decoration.

The portraits, on inspection, proved to be exquisitely done, and linked by a faithfully-depicted true lovers' knot. The design upon which they were imposed was a curious wingless dragon, with marvellous azure scales and crimson jaws. One of the portraits presented the head of a man, bearded and handsome, the other a young and beautiful woman.

The engineer gasped. The face of the pictured woman was the face of Olwen Griffiths.

CHAPTER II.

"You See, It Has Come to Me."

"You have not been down to the Bay for nothing, sir, but it is a good day for the line whatever. Olwen, Mr. Anderson has some fish, will you not take them through?"

A trifle constrained, yet her own quiet, serious self, Olwen entered the living room of the cottage at whose gate the engineer, but an hour before, had parted from her almost abruptly. She did not meet his glance nor linger longer than was necessary to relieve him of his three silvery victims which he carried. Nevertheless, their hands touched and the girl coloured at the contact.

Another moment and Olwen had retreated to the little kitchen at the rear of the cottage. Edmund Anderson stepped towards his picturesque Welsh landlady, who sat, bowed, yet placid, knitting in the chimney-corner.

"Mrs. Griffiths," he said, "I have something to show you, do you mind putting on your glasses?"

"Dear me!" answered the old Welshwoman, all the quick curiosity of her race aroused, "with pleasure, sir, with pleasure!" And she mounted tremulously the black-rimmed spectacles which lay on the round table near her.

Edmund Anderson extended a brown palm, in which was the pendant he had so strangely brought up from the marginal waters of Carnarvon Bay. While the other scanned it curiously, he opened it and drew out the painted strip of ribbon.

"Indeed!" cried the Welshwoman, "what a pretty toy! And is it the pictures you want me to look at. Dear, dear, how small the work is, to be sure!"

She lifted off her glasses, polished and replaced them. The cheerful smile died from her withered features, and she peered at him sharply.

"These are faces I have not seen for many a long year, Mr. Anderson," she said gravely, "and even then they were older and sadder than these. They are Sir Joscelyn Ellis and Lady Ellis, his wife. They were at Dinas Castle before Sir David. He was a Caradoc Ellis and they were Howell Ellises. This strange beast is the Howell dragon, such as used to be on the gate-posts of the Castle. When Sir David came in he must needs have wings put to them to make them Caradoc dragons. But how did this get to you, sir, if I may ask—you are not an Ellis in any way, are you?"

The engineer shook his head and pointed to the miniature which she had identified as that of Lady Ellis. "Does that portrait remind you of no one?" he demanded.

The Welshwoman pondered.

"N—no," she confessed, bewildered, "who should it, sir?" she stopped suddenly and turned in her chair.

"Olwen, dear!" she called, "Olwen!" There was a note of suppressed excitement in her voice. Olwen obeyed the summons, casting a glance of grave inquiry at the engineer. Her fostermother was looking from the miniature on the ribbon to the face of her adopted child.

"Have I been blind all these years?" she murmured. Then she confronted the engineer with a mixture of eagerness and alarm. "Where did this come from, sir," she added, "and why do you show it to me now?"

"I could not have shown it to you one moment earlier, Mrs. Griffiths," declared Edmund Anderson truthfully, "it only passed into my possession within the last quarter of an hour. I drew it up out of the Bay—it had been attached, by some extraordinary accident, to a hook of my line. Recognising the likeness to your foster-daughter, and knowing her story, I at once thought of the wreck in which she had so nearly perished, though it does seem impossible that such a slight thing could have survived eighteen years of buffeting among the reefs of Porth Dinas. It may well, however, have lain buried in the sand and been gradually washed bare again."

The Welshwoman gazed at her adopted child for an instant, then cried out: "The chain, Olwen!" she exclaimed, "the chain—go and bring it!"

Infected with the mysterious excitement of her companions, Olwen went out of the low-ceiled, simply-furnished apartment and they heard her mount the stairs. Her fostermother fingered the links attached to the pendant.

"It is sadly worn," she said, "but we shall see. Oh! I must have been blind, sir, not to think how like my Olwen's face was to Lady Ellis'."

"But if Lady Ellis was, by any chance, Olwen's mother," replied the engineer, "who was the woman in whose arms Olwen was found?"

Mrs. Griffiths sighed.

"Lady Ellis," she told him, "never had then a twelve-month old baby girl, her only child, Margaret, was a grown woman of twenty-two years before the wreck, when she ran away with a ne'er-do-well Englishman. Miss Margaret, or Mrs. Western, as she made herself, was never heard of again. It—it may have been her that came ashore that night, all bruised and battered upon the rocks below there, so that none of us could have recognised her, even if we had thought of such a thing."

She broke off, Olwen had returned—she held out to her fostermother a long and somewhat heavily-fashioned chain of peculiar design. Its links formed a pronounced figure-of-eight, with pearls set in the crossing of the links. The terminal links were shattered and disjoined.

"This piece of chain, sir," said the Welshwoman, "was round the poor creature's neck when she was brought here dead. Rubbed as the short bits on the locket are you can see that they are like it. Both locket and chain must have been Miss Margaret's—that is, Mrs. Western's—here are her maiden initials on the side of the locket, 'M. E.' for Margaret Ellis. The painting must be her mother's work—Olwen's grand-

mother, no doubt, she was a fine painter, they say. And the tiny gold box, or locket or whatever it is, she will have had made on purpose, to give Miss Margaret in a present."

Mrs. Griffiths took the ornaments into her own hands.

"Look, sir," she added, "this plain ring is off a watch, Miss Margaret must have carried hers on it. And when she was dragged up over the reefs—for there was a string of Porth Dinas men trying to save any poor soul that was washed within reach—the chain must have snapped. Part of it stayed about her neck and part of it was lost, to be found in this strange way. The watch being heavier, must have got pulled off its ring."

The Welshwoman rose heavily.

"Olwen," she faltered—"though you'll not have to be Olwen any more if we can find out what name your mother gave you—I'm afraid I'm going to lose you. You're Miss Western, if we're not all very much mistaken, and Sir David up at the Castle is your cousin ever so many times removed. I've tried to be as good as a mother to you and now you'll have to go back to your own people and place. And yet, my lamb, you'll find few of your folk to welcome you, for there isn't a Howell Ellis left in Porth Dinas."

Olwen stole to her foster-mother's side.

"I don't want to leave you, *mam bach*," she said, "and perhaps—perhaps, it's all a mistake." And she laid her head against the Welshwoman's shoulder.

The excitement in her voice gave lie to her pretence of incredulity, and Edmund Anderson, catching a glimpse of a fair flushed face and shining eyes, thought he had never seen his little Welsh sweetheart so radiantly pretty.

"I—I suppose Sir David should be told of our discovery as soon as possible," he remarked, assuming a casual air, "with your permission, Mrs. Griffiths, I should like to put it before him. Sir David and I are friendly and, naturally, as I found the missing link, so to speak, I am interested in the affair."

"I'm sure it's very kind of you, sir," said the other, "and indeed, you will know just how to explain it to him so that he will see how wonderfully it has all come about. You would wish, maybe, to take Olwen's chain, sir. And a blessing it is we've kept it. I did once think of parting with it when we were sending Olwen to school and it was a bad year with the quarry. But we managed, we managed!"

The engineer gathered up the pendant and chain and slipped them into his pocket.

"I will see Sir David at once," he answered, "in an hour or so you shall know what he says."

"Olwen and I will be very much obliged, sir," replied the Welshwoman, heartily, as she returned to her knitting, "it is marvellous that your hook did bring up the locket—there is surely a providence in it."

"Let us hope so," said the engineer, and he picked up his cap. Olwen crossed to open the door and Edmund Anderson passed out.

"You said," he whispered to her, on the threshold, "that you couldn't help my being your lover, and having the lover's luck. You see, it has come to me. I wonder if it will last till to-morrow, when I go for my answer—not to Olwen Griffiths, but to a certain little Miss Western, whose Christian name I don't even know yet."

"I don't want to leave you," she said, "and perhaps—perhaps it's all a mistake."

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He caught her hand—she allowed him to retain it for a moment, then darted in again. But her glance and her arch smile set the engineer's pulses beating joyously as he went down the street and skirted the shore on his way to Dinas Castle.

CHAPTER III.

Where the Luck Lay.

"The weakness of this extraordinary case, my dear Anderson, is your own decidedly singular position. I ask you in all frankness, what would the courts think of such a claim, put forward on behalf of an ignorant old Welshwoman and a nameless girl, by a young gentleman whose interest in the affair is purely romantic?"

Sir David Ellis, having completed his question, rested his chin upon his lean knuckles and surveyed the engineer. The baronet was seated at his library table, surrounded by musty folios and discoloured prints. Before him lay a manuscript volume, in which he had been making an occasional correction.

Edmund Anderson frowned.

"The evidence of the chain and the pendant," he said, "is none the less significant because it is extraordinary."

The baronet laughed.

"Coincidence," he retorted, "is not proof. You will find it difficult to demonstrate that, even if this dead woman—from whose neck the chain, and possibly the pendant, came—were Margaret Ellis, the child in her arms was, beyond doubt, hers. It might, for instance, have been that of a passenger. However, I won't weary you by arguments that, in the end, we should have to leave to the lawyers. Suffice it that if this Olwen Griffiths contemplates posing as Margaret Ellis' daughter in the hope of ousting me from some fortune or other which I am supposed to possess, she is greatly mistaken. The Porth Dinas estate is barely insolvent."

"Oust you!" exclaimed the engineer, astonished. "What do you mean?"

"Your assumption of innocence," sneered Sir David, "is almost convincing. As if you did not know that the estate is entailed in the direct line, and that Margaret Ellis or her heirs, if she be dead and have any, could claim it and leave me to console myself with the title."

He clenched his withered fingers in the impotent passion of the old.

"But the ingenious little plot which you have trumped up during your stay here, Anderson," he continued, "is as futile as it is obvious. Under a disentailing deed just executed, with the consent of the next heirs-at-law, the Porth Dinas estate will be publicly sold in London within the next day or two. Out of the proceeds I trust to be able to pay the family debts and to purchase myself a small annuity on which I may pursue my heraldic studies in peace."

"I see," said Edmund Anderson coldly; "and if you were to recognise Miss—Miss Western as your kinswoman you would have to surrender even that."

"Quite so," responded the baronet, going on with his corrections upon the page before him; "and if I do not oppose her, my legal successors will, and the estate will vanish in the smoke of a Chancery case. But, really, these are things you must discuss with your *protegees*—your landlady and her foster-daughter. They do not concern me, but my lawyers."

"And that is your last word?" asked the engineer disdainfully.

Sir David nodded, turned a leaf of his book and touched a bell at his elbow. Edmund Anderson dispensed with the formality of a farewell and marched out, indignant.

Dinas Castle, a gaunt granite structure, stood in a recess of the low hills bordering the haven of Porth Dinas. To reach the village and his lodging by the shortest route it was necessary to cross a portion of the weed-covered reefs now exposed by a neap tide of exceptional lowness. From a point near the Castle he struck athwart them, stepping agilely upon the dangerous surfaces and pondering the singular situation created during the last few hours by the odd fruits of his fishing expedition.

It seemed but too true that Olwen could not vindicate her identity except at great cost, and—if Sir David were not lying—at the practical ruin of the estate to which it appeared she might lay claim as the presumptive heir of the elder branch of the Ellises.

He gained the spot whence he had thrown the line and made that singular capture. The idea struck him to try and discover where the pendant might have lain. His line had been a fifteen-fathom one, and he had flung it towards the north-west—the peak of Parys Mountain, the highest point of the Isle of Anglesey, had been straight before him across the bay.

The line too, had run out to its fullest extent—some ninety feet; it had yielded suddenly when he drew on it, possibly a part of the chain, or even the missing watch that must have been worn on it, had been detained in a chance crevice. He shrugged his shoulders at the

It was all rich copper ore.

unlikelihood of his search proving profitable, nevertheless he continued it.

At length he came upon a slate-coloured rock, higher, rounder, and not so densely hung with weed as its neighbouring reefs. It lay in the line of his estimated cast, and he paused to notice how perfect a natural aquarium it was, with its few, gliding, diminutive fishes, its anemones, and its crab or two. But something yellow and glittering caught his eye and he stooped to perceive, in a niche of the hollow just clear of the water, something yellow and gleaming. It was a small watch, battered and worn, but dainty enough to be recognised, even in its ruin, as a woman's.

He sought to release the watch and failed. It was wedged tightly into a crevice that held it obstinately. Taking his knife from his pocket, the engineer picked expertly at the rock. A flat slice detached itself and the watch was freed. But Edmund Anderson was not looking at the little dented timepiece, his eyes were fixed upon the bit of rock he had displaced; it was speckled with yellow-red points that glistened dully.

The engineer whistled. He could not be mistaken in their significance, they were the pyrites of copper—the most frequent form of copper-ore. A thrill ran over him. He had knelt down to operate upon the rock, and was facing northwards and westwards. Across the bay he could still discern the peak of Parys Mountain—the once great copper-mine that had been worth in its palmy days £300,000 a year. He had fallen upon the continuation of the vein—here on the very foreshore of the Porth Dinas estate that should have been Olwen's heritage. He strode hither and thither in a circle of twenty yards, examining the weed-draped rock. It was all rich copper ore, and it dipped towards the land.

Some words rang suddenly in his ear. They were Sir David's of half-an-hour ago. "The estates will be sold publicly in London within the next day or two." His heart leapt into his mouth as he realised what those words might mean. Then, deliberately, he began to kick the dangling masses of weed over the fractures which he had made. The pieces of ore he placed, with the watch, in his pocket. As he did so, he touched the pendant and drew it out.

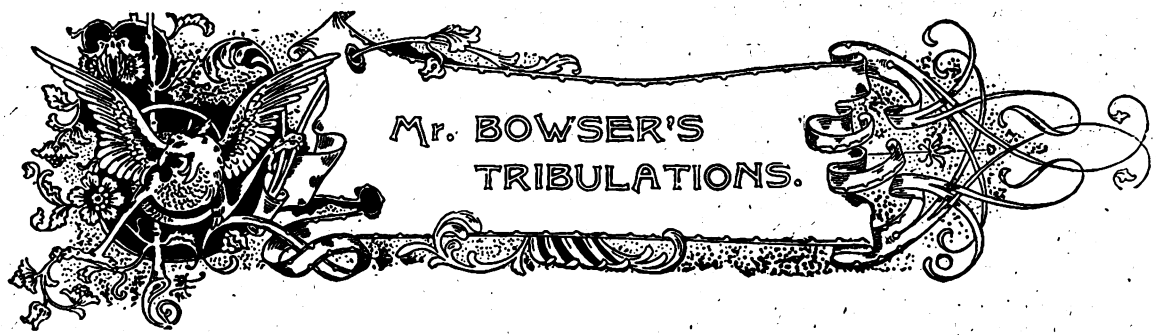
"So," he said, regarding it musingly; "so it was luck, after all. Well, that depends—on what happens in London."

* * * * *

What happened in London was simple yet momentous. Upon the strength of those pieces of ore and his personal reputation for intregity, Edmund Anderson secured the use of some twenty thousand pounds of capital, sent a lawyer to Tokenhouse Yard, and bought the Porth Dinas estate over the heads of half-a-dozen unenthusiastic bidders. In a month it was the property of an intelligent private syndicate.

Before the first ship-load of ore out of the Porth Dinas mine was smelted at Swansea, Olwen was Mrs. Anderson.

Olwen Anderson never fought an action against Sir David. There was nothing to gain by it. But the engineer has called his small son and heir by the name of "Joscelyn Ellis Anderson." The "Ellis," he is careful to explain, is not on behalf of the Caradoc, but of the Howell Ellises. And it is in honour of the Howell Ellises that the Caradoc wings have been taken off the dragons on the gate-posts of Dinas Castle, where the Andersons still spend an occasional few weeks, the engineer having stipulated for its specific assignment to himself.



HE BUYS A NEW KODAK AND TAKES SOME SNAP-SHOTS.

Mr. Bowser is so regular in his comings and goings that when he came home four hours early the other afternoon Mrs. Bowser knew that something unusual had happened. She didn't have to ask what it was, as he had a kodak with him and at once proceeded to explain.

"I thought I'd come home and get a few snap shots at the landscapes round here."

"You—you've gone and got another kodak!" she exclaimed.

"I have a kodak here, yes, but you needn't look as if you wanted to swallow it."

"But you got one a few months ago, and don't you remember what happened? All the pictures you took were cross-eyed and wrong end up, and you finally got annoyed and smashed things. What on earth possessed you to get another?"

"My dear woman, it was no wonder I couldn't take pictures with that thing they called a kodak. It was a rank swindle and little better than a corn-sheller. It was inevitable that I should make a failure. In this machine, however——"

"You've got something different?" she finished.

"I have. I can take a photograph to knock the spots off the best of them. I was practising all the afternoon, and I'm tickled to death. The pictures are so life-like that you can see every hair on a dog's tail. In a week's time we will fill our rooms with works of art, and you can point to them with pride and say that your husband did them all. I should think you would be glad to encourage me in my artistic tastes."

Mrs. Bowser sighed and turned away, and Mr. Bowser gathered up his outfit and left the house, saying that

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he would be back in the course of a couple of hours.

"You will try to keep out of trouble, won't you?" she asked, as she followed him to the door.

"Trouble! Trouble! How on earth can I get into trouble?" he replied.

"In lots of ways."

"In no way at all. I take my kodak and wander about until I find a pleasing landscape. Then I press the button. How can any trouble arise from that? When I come home, we'll fit up a dark room. I want to develop my own negatives."

He started off down the street with the ambition of an artist surging up in his soul, and the family cat sat on the steps and looked after him and wondered whether he'd come home on his own legs or in the ambulance. Mr. Bowser did not have to go far before finding something that appealed to his artistic temperament.

An old umbrella mender, who had taken a seat under a tree, had fallen asleep. His hat had fallen off, his legs were stretched out on the footpath, and the picturesque attitude would make a famous picture. Mr. Bowser stopped and prepared his kodak, and as he did so various appropriate titles for the picture ran through his head. It could be called "A Modern Brigand," "Innocence in a Great City," "Not Dead, But Sleeping," or "Wake Him Not." He had just got the camera focussed when a man crossed the road from a public-house and asked:

"What ye goin' to do to old Petro?"

"Take his picture."

"What for?"

"Oh, just to add to my collection. I'm out taking snap shots, you know. I think the old man will work out beautifully."

"But I don't think so! The old man is my friend, and nobody's goin' to play tricks on him if I can help it. Git along with that black box!"

"But don't you understand that I simply want a picture of him as showing my own work with the kodak?" protested Mr. Bowser.

"I understand all about it. The old gentleman may take yer umbreller to mend and furgit to bring it back, and ye show coppers his pictur' and get him into trubble. Git along or there'll be a row."

The man squared himself up and looked so ugly and so much in earnest that Mr. Bowser felt it wise to move on. It didn't take him long, however, to find another subject. On the steps of a tumble-down old shanty there sat a baby, and in the doorway above him stood a goat. There were sentiment and picturesqueness combined, and almost at the first glance Mr. Bowser decided to label the picture "The Baby's Guardian." The baby stared at him, and the goat kept a watchful eye as he moved about and made ready, and in another minute the button would have been pressed but for an interruption. A woman suddenly appeared in the doorway beside the goat and called out:

"Now then, what's going on out here?"

"I'm about to take a picture with my kodak," replied Mr. Bowser.

"Is it of the baby and the goat?"

"Yes."

"Then you drop it like a hot pertaty or I'll come down on ye like a thousand of bricks!"

"My dear woman, let me explain. I am an amateur photographer. I am taking a few pictures for——"

"I understands perfectly," she interrupted. "Me old man sat just here one day two months ago a-smokin' of his pipe and feelin' that it was good to live when along comes a bloke wid jest sich a machine as that. He peeks and squints and takes a pictur' and goes off, and two days later me Dan'l is arrested by the police fur stealin' four casks of cement. Be off, I say!"

"My good woman, I solemnly assure you——" began Mr. Bowser, but she advanced and punched him in the back with a broom, and he had to move on.

He travelled a few streets further before he struck his next landscape. It was a rude shanty, with a sign of "Inn" over the door, and there were a dozen picturesque figures loafing about. Mr. Bowser decided to take a picture and label it "The Home of Industry," and none of the idlers objected as he made ready. Indeed, some of them assumed still more picturesque poses, as if to favour him. In a couple of minutes his work was done, and he was about to turn away when one of the gang approached and queried:

"That was a snap shot, wasn't it?"

"It was."

"And we all did our best for you?"

"You did, and I'm much obliged. I think the negative will work out beautifully."

"What about the drinks, old chap? The boys is expectin' at least a cask of beer. We's all hardworkin' men, with wives and kids to support, and we can't pose for nothin'. Will ye come in and tell Jimmy to tap a fresh cask?"

"A cask!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser. "No, of course not. I'm willing to buy you each a glass of beer, but you don't want to pile it on too thick."

"They was beautiful poses!" suggested the man.

"Yes, the poses were all right."

"And the boys won't take less'n a cask."

"Then they won't take anything. You all ought to feel highly honoured at being photographed."

"That may be. But about that cask."

"I sha'n't pay for any cask."

The man turned to his gang and made a sign, and next minute Mr. Bowser was surrounded and picked up and flung into a blanket held by six men. Before he could even yell out he was being tossed in the air, and for the next ten minutes he performed more gyrations than he thought it possible for a human being to go through with.

When the men were weary he was spilt out of the blanket, the fragments of the camera were handed to him, and he was started up the road. His back was covered with grass and dirt, his hat knocked in, his whole appearance dilapidated, and there was a look of terror in his eyes, and he couldn't keep his chin still.

A number of boys followed him as "a living curiosity," and now and then a pedestrian asked him what had happened, but he made a bee line for home and finally shut his front door behind him. All he brought back with him was one piece of the kodak frame. As he stood before Mrs. Bowser with bulging eyes and wabbling chin she realised what had happened; but, like the good wife she was, she refrained from adding to his sorrows.

"Yes, I know," she quietly observed. "It's all my fault, of course, and your lawyer will see my lawyer, and there'll be a separation and all that, but meanwhile you'd better go up and take a bath and change your clothes and lie down for half-an-hour before dinner. You have evidently run across some landscapes too big for your artistic temperament and had a bad time of it."

And Mr. Bowser went upstairs without a word in reply.

M. Quad.

[Next week: He Acts as an Arbitrator.]

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SECOND WEEK. **START TO-DAY.**

SHORT STORIES
NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH TOWNS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.
Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each set describing the name of a town of over 5,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you till we tell you to send it in.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

SECOND LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:
To exclude monarch..... Barking.

11. Grain, move quickly!	11	.....
12. One who hazards	12	.....
13. Six and one trees	13	.....
14. Part of a violin; conclusion.....	14	.....
15. Ancient thigh	15	.....
16. Cheat a wood	16	.....
17. One of the consonants.....	17	.....
18. A hireling.....	18	.....
19. Adorn a stream with lustre	19	.....
20. A miry place	20	.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

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Cut to edge—>

Baby's First Tooth.

A Dream that Didn't Come True.

I had passed a wretched night; a fitful, restless, wandering night, a night that seemed to have no beginning, and no end, only a disjointed confused middle. The most unsatisfactory part of it, too, was that all this misery had been caused by one who, hitherto, had been my joy and pride, viz., our baby. He had been a model baby, retiring easily to rest with a beaming smile on his dimpled countenance, and being heard of no more, at least by me, till the following morning, when his custom was to wake as "bright as a button."

But on this night he had dissipated all these pleasing impressions, and made it hard to realise that he had ever been anything but a whining, howling, inconsolable creature, a burden to himself, and to all about him. At least this was about the state of my feelings towards him as I swallowed a hasty breakfast and hurried city-wards, disinclined for food or work after my bad night.

How many miles had I paced up and down my room, while the winter wind howled in the chimney, and the frosty air nipped my unclad limbs! How many little saucepans had I warmed up, and stooped over under my wife's direction, while she, well-nigh distraught, endeavoured vainly to soothe the miscreant's anguish, I don't know; but I do know that more than once I was tempted to fling both saucepans and child out of the window, with such demoniacal irritation did the constant wail possess me.

Some of my remarks made during the watches of the night had led to a slight coolness between myself and the wife of my bosom, a breach that was scarcely healed when I had to leave her to catch the train. I was still too tired and too cross to care to retract what I had said, although I was fully aware that my language had been other than that of a fond parent.

She was too worn out to be very reasonable, and to meet me two-thirds of the way, which I had always held to be the wife's duty in making up a conjugal quarrel, so that everything was far from being comfortable between us.

I was anxious, too, in a sneaking, half-acknowledged way, about the baby's health, though I would not have owned it for the world. Little as I knew of children's ailments, I felt sure there must be some physical cause for his outrageous conduct. He had fallen into a feverish sleep at last, and my wife was anxiously bending over him when I rose to go.

"Kiss baby, George," she said, "and tell him you're sorry you were so cross with him for knocking that sauce-pan of his food over on your poor foot."

"Oh, hang the baby," I replied—I had just scalded my throat with some boiling tea, which is my only apology.

"Very well," said my wife, with great dignity, "then I am sure I will not trouble you to kiss me; good morning."

"Good morning," and I hurried off.

I had a busy enough time in the city and plenty to occupy my thoughts, but still this, our first quarrel, somehow haunted me. More than once I pictured the baby at his last gasp, and my wife with no one to fly to, for we had not been in England long, and had made but few friends. Until the last twelvemonth, we had both lived in Fiji, where my father was a Wesleyan missionary. My wife had rather a romantic history, and had in fact a streak of royal blood in her veins—not much to boast about, however.

Her great-great-grandmother was one of the numerous wives of a Fijian chief. She was an Englishwoman who with two sailors formed the only survivors on a raft which had drifted from a wreck somewhere or other in the Pacific Ocean. I regret to state that the two sailors were eaten, but to the woman was offered the doubtful alternative of becoming the bride of the chief. She bore him one child, and shortly afterwards died of the shame and misery of the whole business.

This child, my Kate's great-grandmother, got into the hands of some English settlers, married an Englishman, and after the lapse of two or three generations the brief episode above recorded was almost forgotten. My wife and my sisters were at school together at Melbourne; I met her, loved her, married her, and finally on my father's death, and on securing a good appointment in a London house, brought her to England.

I am bound to enter into these details, as they have a great deal to do with the point of my story. By lunch time I was quite in my normal state of temper, and long before the day was ended I got very remorseful and anxious to make amends.

I filled my bag with little peace offerings for both wife and child, and determined to make up for all deficiencies in the past by an excess of amiability for the future. I still felt drowsy, and heavy-eyed, but apart from this, all traces of the night's vigil had disappeared. I would have a nap in the train, I thought, and arrive home cheerful, good-tempered, and altogether a different creature from the irritable fiend I had been in the morning.

Unfortunately the train was crowded, and I was unable to get a quiet corner. A gentleman in my compartment kept up a constant flow of talk. He was one of those persons who have an opinion on everything, and know very much about nothing. He was what you call a well-informed man, and advanced his theories in a dogmatic style, which compelled attention, if not interest.

After prophesying the future course of the Government, and the probability of a revolution shortly, he plunged into an argument with a feeble old gentleman opposite on the source of crime. I was more asleep than awake, but every now and then I caught a sentence. Hereditary taint, he asserted, must sooner or later make itself felt. Given a murderous ancestor, there follows, as a matter of course, a murderous descendant. He was very glib with illustrations proving how evil tendencies once implanted had reappeared in families after successive generations of respectability.

I could not forbear smiling to myself as I thought of how I had an exception at home which might prove the

rule. Supposing I showed him my gentle, loving wife, whose attention to her religious duties had been a reproach to me ever since I had known her, would he believe that only a few generations back her ancestors were worshipping idols and eating missionaries with equal zest and fervour?

But the train stopped, the garrulous old faddist got out, and I thought no more of him. It was a dreary night, with a driving sleet and piercing wind, and never had my home seemed so comfortable. Kate had on her prettiest smile, and her prettiest gown, and did not wait for any apology or peace-offering before giving me the kiss denied in the morning with ample interest.

There was a savoury smell ascending the kitchen stairs, my slippers were warmed and ready for my feet. The baby was not visible either to the eye or ear. The fire was a beauty, and when the dinner came it proved to be a favourite one of mine. There was nothing for it but to kiss my wife again, and we settled down at peace with ourselves and our surroundings.

"When shall I see baby?" I asked meekly, when the first course was removed, and a delicious pudding of Kate's own making placed before me.

"All in good time, George," she answered. "I have a great surprise for you. You were not so anxious about dear baby this morning."

"My darling, this morning I was a brute! This evening I am a reformed character, brimming over with parental affection. And what is the surprise?"

Kate's eyes were dancing with delight.

"No, I won't tell you," she said, "because it is a real big surprise—something we none of us, you least of all, expected."

"Well, dear, I am content to wait. Pass me my paper, and let me see my baby before he goes to bed. I want to make things square with him, as well as with you."

It was a grand fire, and I settled cosily down by it, while Kate went upstairs. Looking into its glowing caverns, I seemed to see and think all sorts of things. What a scurrying day it had been! How good it was to come home to a place and a fire like this after the din and rush of the city! How did people get along who had no wives and no homes and no fires?

I wondered if that dogmatic old bore in the train had a home. What an insufferable nuisance he must be to his family, and what preposterous nonsense that was he had been talking about. Hereditary taint, indeed; hereditary fiddlesticks! What trace was there of the Fee-fi-fo-fum in my pretty little wife? Perhaps it would come out in the baby, who, by the way, was a long time making his appearance. Perhaps—but here the door opened and Kate came in alone.

Kate, yes; but not the Kate who had gone upstairs. What *had* the girl done to herself? Her hair was different, somehow piled up, and sticking on the top of her head. I was first going to laugh at this, but something in her face stopped me. There was an expression there I had never seen before. Stay, I had seen it before, but where I could not think, and I turned to the glowing coals for inspiration.

Fiji came back to me, and my father, and a long walk we had had when I was quite a lad. What was it we saw on that walk? Something that had horrified me, I remembered; that frightened me in the night-time till I was driven to take refuge in my mother's bed. Something that was never clearly explained to me till years after, when I was told that we had interrupted a cannibal feast.

The women had their hair done in that same wild fashion as Kate's now, and their faces looked pleased—ferociously pleased. Good gracious! even as hers did now when I turned at last to look at her again. She was close to me. I felt her breath upon my cheek. I had an awful presentiment of coming evil; and then she spoke rapidly, incoherently, her voice rising almost into a yell, just as her ancestors used.

"George," she said, "I have a surprise, as I told you—a great surprise, such as you have never known. Look into my face—well!—can you read it there—what I have done? Don't turn your eyes away, for I will make you listen. See, I am strong—strong as that wild, free chief, whose blood is in my viens mixed with your English blood. But it was not enough. To-day it has all come back. I have fallen as my people fell a hundred years ago, and I have done as they did. I am no English wife for you—take me back, I can never be as I was again."

My tongue seemed chained with a dismal horror. What was she leading up to? I tried to speak, to move away from her. Was this the end of my home, and the happy life I had been thinking of before she came in?

"Kate," I said, able to speak at last, "you went to fetch baby, and you have come back quite changed. Tell me all that is in your mind quickly. All you have done, and then let me go."

Her voice went on, indeed it had never ceased, even while I was speaking.

"You said, 'hang the baby,' this morning, George, so you cannot care. If you had not said that I think it would have saved me. I felt he was only mine after that, for you did not love him. I looked at him in his cradle after you had gone, for I loved him; then while I was looking away out of the past, from a hundred years ago came the feeling that I must—must—he was so white and soft—and you did not mind."

"Go on!" I shouted, "woman or fiend, whichever you are."

"He was very quiet, and the feeling came; and, George, I am no better than those old people of mine. Can't you guess? And now I have begun it must always go on. See, I come nearer and nearer to you. There is a wolf in me calling for more and more!"

I could not push her away—my strength seemed gone. Her teeth were in my cheek. There was a crash, and—

"Why, dearest, what a nap you have had! You did frighten baby when you snorted so. It was so pretty to see him try and wake you. Did you feel something on your cheek just now, George? That was my surprise. It was a tooth that worried baby last night. It came through this afternoon, and now he has bitten daddy with it, haven't you, my precious? Tell him you won't say that naughty word to him again, George."

It was all a dream then, put into my mind by that hereditary idiot. But what an awful dream! No wonder I snorted.

"I think you are too near the fire, George," said Kate. "Your face is so hot and red. Kiss baby, and tell him you are sorry. We must all be friends."

I kissed wife and baby over and over again, and then again after that. I looked at his new possession, and the mark he had made with it on my cheek with all the pride in the world. I have never used a harsh word to him since, though he is old enough to have a latch-key now, and does occasionally stop a little late at his club. And I have never told either him or his mother of that awful dream I had the day he cut his first tooth.

G. T. R.

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A Girl & Two Men

How the Waves Gave Ethel her True Lover.

"Oh, Mr. Kenyon, I'm surprised at you!" she exclaimed, with laughter in her deep grey eyes.

The Honourable Norman Kenyon with difficulty repressed a strong desire to snatch the girl up in his arms and kiss her. He knew that she was making fun of him, and he tried to smile back at her. She had not given him the answer which he had dared to hope for, but was her laughter a prelude to a "Yes" or a "No"?

"I share your surprise, Miss Selwyn," he answered, fingering his carefully-waxed moustache. "It is strange that I have never mustered up sufficient courage to ask the question before."

"And *I* am astonished that you ever contemplated such a proposal."

"But why?" he asked earnestly, leaning towards her. "How could I help falling in love with the dearest little girl on earth? Won't you say 'Yes,' Ethel? You must know that I——"

"It is quite impossible, Mr. Kenyon," she interrupted hastily, and all the laughter passed from her face. "I am extremely sorry that—that—this has happened—indeed I am, Mr. Kenyon. But the only answer I can give to you is 'No.'"

For a time neither of them spoke. Ethel lay back on her deck-chair, gazing through half-closed eyelids at the vast canopy of stars which hung overhead; while Norman leant against the taffrail, his eyes fixed on the shadowy outline of the girl by his side, and his thoughts travelling back to the time when he had first met her. All around them was the stillness of a tropical night in the midst of the ocean—a stillness unbroken save by the ceaseless throb of the engines and the swirl of waters in the wake of the great vessel. It was long past the usual hour for retiring, but both of them infinitely preferred the cool breeze on the promenade deck to the stifling heat of their state rooms.

Little more than six months had elapsed since Norman Kenyon had been introduced to Ethel Selwyn in a London ball-room. The moment he became acquainted with her he realised that he had met his fate. Hitherto he had never evinced more than a passing interest in any woman; but when Ethel crossed his path, Norman for the first time fell a victim to the arrows of Love. He became a frequent visitor at Mrs. Selwyn's house in Park Lane, and somehow or other he managed to meet his divinity at most of the principal events of the London season. During the early summer he arranged numerous driving and boating parties in Ethel's honour, and his love for her was revealed by his every action when in her company.

Kenyon was by no means the only young man who was passionately devoted to Ethel. She had admirers by the score, but she treated the majority of them with silent contempt, and yawned discreetly at their most tender phrases. Norman rightly considered Jack Hoylake, one of the companions of Ethel's childhood, to be his most dangerous rival in her affections. Jack was as deeply in love with Miss Selwyn as Kenyon was, and he laid siege to her heart in quite as masterly a manner as the latter suitor.

The two young men were strangely different in temperament. Jack was an athlete pure and simple. In his public school days he made a big score in the Eton and Harrow match, and a few years later he stroked the Dark Blue boat to victory. He was a cross-country runner of no mean repute, a daring rider in the hunting field, and as thoroughgoing a sportsman as ever handled a gun.

Kenyon, however, was his direct antithesis. No one ever pictured that frock-coated and eye-glassed young exquisite indulging in any more violent exercise than a canter down the Row. He was not a sportsman, and he never took part in athletic games of any description; even lawn tennis and golf were obnoxious to him. While the majority of his acquaintances considered him a very good fellow, they one and all regarded him as a mere "Society doll," and looked down on him accordingly.

For her part, Ethel Selwyn was about as perfect a specimen of the modern athletic English girl as one could wish to meet. The manifold amusements of fashionable London had little attraction for her; she much preferred the freer open-air life of the country. A tearing gallop in the wake of the hounds gave her far more enjoyment than the gayest of London balls, and an afternoon on the golf links did not tire her half so much as a shopping excursion in Bond Street. She admired courage and muscular strength more than any other qualities in men, and the scented, lisping creatures who hovered round her in Society filled her with contempt.

Although she bestowed her smiles with great impartiality on both of her lovers, Jack Hoylake was the man after her own heart. Ethel did not despise Norman Kenyon as many despised him, for there was a something about the man which attracted her to him. Despite the fact that they had very little in common, he was by no means so obnoxious to her as most men of his character; and she not only tolerated Norman, but even grew to like him a little, in spite of his effeminate manners.

In the early autumn of the year, Ethel's widowed mother decided that, accompanied by her daughter, she would pay a long promised visit to some relatives in Australia. Miss Selwyn welcomed the change with delight, for she had long wished to travel further afield than the Riviera, and make the acquaintance of cities and people that were all new and strange to her. Preparations for the journey were quickly made, and in a very short time the day of departure arrived.

When Norman heard of their projected voyage he was at first filled with dismay. The thought of being separated from Ethel for even a few months was too much for him, and he cast about for an excuse to accompany them. His health, however, was excellent, and he had neither friends nor business to take him to the Antipodes. But when he heard that Jack Hoylake was travelling to Australia by the same boat, ostensibly for the purpose of following the fortunes of the English cricket eleven, Norman speedily determined not to be

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left behind, and he joined the *Valencis* at Brindisi without any excuse whatever.

Ethel was unaffectedly glad to have both of her lovers near her, and she naturally spent the greater part of her time in their company. Norman intended to seize the first opportunity of proposing to her, but he rarely got the chance to be alone with her for more than a few minutes at a time. Fortune favoured him, however, and one night, shortly after leaving Colombo, he managed to secure a *tête-à-tête* with her on the promenade deck, while Jack was engaged with Mrs. Selwyn in the saloon. He asked Ethel to become his wife, but all his hopes were dashed to the ground by the emphatic nature of her refusal.

For several minutes Norman stood by her side in silence, his mind wandering back over the few brief months that he had known her, recalling every little incident that had made their intercourse so sweet to him, and wondering in a dull, listless way how he could ever hope to fill the void which had been made in his life.

"Is there no hope for me?" he asked faintly.

"I'm sorry—very sorry, Mr. Kenyon," she replied. "But you and I are not suited for each other."

"Not suited for each other!" he exclaimed. "Why, how can that be, Miss Selwyn?"

"Because our temperaments are so dissimilar. I am what you would be inclined to call a 'New woman.' I adore athletics and all outdoor exercises, and I expect a man to be courageous and skilled in manly exercises. But—if you will excuse me saying it, Mr. Kenyon—you are simply a 'man about town,'—a *dilettante*. You have no aim or ambition in life, you despise everything that calls for the least physical exertion. London and the attractions of Society, balls, parties, and the like, make up your world. You care about nothing beyond that, whilst I—I despise it."

"But why should that make any difference, Ethel?" he pleaded passionately. "I know I am not an athlete, like—like Hoylake, for instance. But I love you and will do my best to make you happy. Surely that is enough."

"The man I marry must be a Man in every sense of the word," she replied.

"And am I not a man? Surely the——"

A rapid succession of horrible grating crashes suddenly shook the ship from stem to stern, and flung them to the deck. In a moment the air was filled with the shrieks and cries of terrified passengers. A quick, sharp order rang out from the bridge deck, and the throbbing of the engines ceased. Kenyon sprang to his feet and assisted Ethel to rise.

"I hope you are not hurt," he said hurriedly. "The ship must have struck on a rock or something. We had better get some warm clothing on, in case it is necessary to take to the boats."

He took hold of her hand and half led, half dragged, her to the hatchway. A crowd of terror-stricken passengers, rudely awakened from their sleep, and many still in their night attire, were struggling to reach the deck. Norman forced a way for himself and Ethel through the press, and they managed to reach the saloon in safety. Here they met Hoylake and Mrs. Selwyn, who were also trying to make their way on deck. Norman assured them that there could be no immediate danger, and acting on his advice, they went to their staterooms to prepare for what might prove to be a night in an open boat.

Meanwhile, the officers and crew of the great vessel were manfully endeavouring to cope with the disaster which had so suddenly befallen them. The captain was coolness itself. He gave his orders quickly and tersely, overlooking nothing needful. Within five minutes he knew that his ship was doomed. The carpenter reported that the bottom of the vessel had been ripped in half-a-dozen places. The watertight compartments had collapsed, and the *Valencis* could not live for more than an hour at most. But the captain's voice was calm and even as he turned to his chief officer.

"Lower and man the boats, Mr. Carruthers," he said. "Women and children first, and do your best to prevent a panic. Lively, now."

Then he walked to the edge of the bridge, and endeavoured to allay the fears of the crowd on the deck below. The *Valencis* had struck on a sunken rock, he explained and nothing could save her. But it would be some time before she could sink, and as they had ample boat accommodation there was absolutely no danger. The boats were sure to be picked up by some other vessel in a few hours at most. The women and children would be the first to leave the ship; but if the passengers only kept cool and did not give way to foolish fears, all would be saved.

His words had a reassuring effect on many of the passengers, and some of them even tried to raise a cheer. But the great majority were too terror-stricken to heed his words, and rushed hither and thither in a state bordering on panic.

When Kenyon and his three companions reached the deck, everything appeared to be in confusion. The passengers were crowded together on the after-deck; some cursing and others praying; some anxiously taking leave of dear ones; whilst others were gathering together huge bundles which they fondly expected to take with them in the boats. From the bridge rocket after rocket streamed forth into the inky darkness, while from the forecastle came the dull boom of a minute gun. But no answering flare of rocket or crash of signal gun came to tell them of help at hand. They were alone in the midst of the ocean.

The deck sloped down to starboard, and the officers and crew were preparing the boats on that side of the vessel. They worked calmly and methodically, as only well-disciplined men can work in time of peril. One of the boats had already left the ship, and a second was rapidly being filled with women and children. The electric deck lights had long since gone out, and their place had been taken by large oil lamps which seemed only to intensify the darkness.

"We must get the ladies into one of the boats as soon as possible," said Norman. The erstwhile easy-going lounger had completely disappeared, and in his place there stood a cool, clear-headed man, who seemed naturally to take the lead of the little party. Hoylake nodded silently in assent, and they commenced to push their way through the crowd round the gangway.

But ere they could reach it, a sudden rush of steam up one of the hatchways sent a thrill of panic through the passengers. A cry of "She's sinking!" a shriek or two, and then a rush of many feet. In an instant, a crowd of panic-stricken men and women were fighting like wild beasts to reach the boats. In those few moments of horror, men who were usually brave and self-possessed struck down and trampled upon helpless women and children, even upon their own wives and little ones. All were driven by the one frantic, unreasoning impulse to save their own lives, and they neither knew nor cared what they did in order to obtain a place in the boats.

The seamen fought manfully to drive back the panic-stricken crowd; but they were almost immediately overwhelmed by numbers. The passengers rushed into the boats, which speedily became overcrowded and were swamped. The sea was filled with a struggling, shrieking mass of humanity, who, had it not been for their cowardly fear, might all have been rescued.

As soon as he saw what had happened, Norman turned and, aided by Hoylake, commenced to force a way back through the struggling throng. Luckily the were only on the outskirts of the crowd, and they managed to escape from it without sustaining any injury.

But Kenyon saw that there was no time to be lost. As yet, none of the passengers had thought of the boats on the port quarter, although several of them were already in the water. Snatching Ethel up in his arms, Norman ran towards one of the port gangways, followed by Hoylake and Mrs. Selwyn.

"Keep off, there!" shouted a quartermaster threateningly, as he saw the two men approaching. "Women and kids first, y'know."

"All right," answered Norman. "We only want to get these two ladies into the boat. I'll help you keep those cowards off afterwards."

They were only just in time. Hardly were the two women safe, when a score of panic-stricken human beings rushed towards the boat. Kenyon and Hoylake planted themselves at the head of the gangway and tried to beat them off with fists and marline-spikes, while the quartermaster assisted as many women and children into the boat as possible.

For a time the two men managed to hold the crowd at bay, but they knew it could not be for long. Norman looked round and saw that the boat was nearly full. If they waited much longer they ran the risk of being swamped.

"Push off! Quick!" he cried. "We can't hold them back any longer."

Just as they were about to cast the rope loose, Hoylake swung himself down into the boat, and a minute later they were clear of the vessel. Realising that they had been defeated, the crowd on deck ran in the direction of the other boats.

Kenyon leant over the taffrail and waved his handkerchief in farewell, hoping that the girl he loved might chance to see it.

"That was a narrow squeak," remarked Jack Hoylake to Miss Selwyn, whom he saw sitting near him.

"Where is Mr. Kenyon?" she asked anxiously. "Is he safe?"

"I don't know," replied Hoylake. "I expected he would follow me, but he does not appear to have done so. See, there he is on deck, leaning on the rail, waving his handkerchief."

"Then he has been left behind," said Ethel in a choking voice.

"Oh, he'll be all right," replied Hoylake carelessly. "He'll get off in one of the other boats."

But Ethel felt that she would never see her lover again, and she turned away sick at heart. This man, who had behaved so courageously in the hour of danger, was the one whom, but a short hour before, she had refused to marry because she thought he was something less than a man.

At one time she had fondly imagined that she loved Hoylake; but now she felt a strange revulsion of feeling towards him. He was an athlete—her ideal man—and yet a mere "Society doll" had surpassed him in bravery when the time of testing came.

True he had behaved courageously, but it was Norman who had taken the lead. Without Kenyon, Hoylake would have been helpless. She felt that he, too, ought to have remained on the deck of the sinking ship.

They found that only three boats had got safely away, and as they had been the last to leave, it was impossible for Kenyon to have been saved. At a short distance from the *Valencis* they rested on their oars in order to see the last of the great liner. They had not long to wait.

The doomed vessel was rapidly filling, and soon the water reached the boilers. There was a sudden hiss of steam, followed by a loud explosion. Part of the deck was blown high into the air, and then, with one last convulsive shudder, the huge vessel plunged stern foremost to her last resting-place.

For a time they rowed to and fro over the place where she had gone down, in the hope of picking up any persons who might still be living. A few were saved and taken into the boats, but Norman Kenyon was not among the number. Then at last they turned and pulled steadily away.

Fortunately the sea was as calm as a lake, and the night was warm even for those latitudes. The boats hung close together, keeping a sharp look-out for any lights which might mark the approach of another vessel. They knew that they must be rescued very soon, for the *Valencis* had gone down in one of the regular steamship tracks across the ocean.

When day broke they saw that their hopes were realised and their troubles at an end. A great liner was bearing down upon them, and their frantic shouts were quickly answered by the boom of a signal gun. With glad hearts they rowed towards her, and were speedily alongside.

As the boats reached the gangway, willing arms were outstretched to help the occupants aboard. Miss Selwyn was one of the first to step on deck, and almost the first man that she saw was her lost lover. Kenyon was tired and haggard-looking, and dressed in a borrowed suit much too large for him, he looked strangely different from the easy-going man of fashion she knew so well.

"Welcome to safety, Miss Selwyn," he said, coming eagerly up to her with outstretched hand. "I hope you are none the worse for your adventure."

"Thank God, you are safe!" cried Ethel fervently, then stopped overwhelmed by her feelings.

"You thought that I was drowned, I suppose. No, I managed to escape, after all. Before the *Valencis* blew up I jumped overboard and tried to swim for it. You did not know that I could swim, did you, Miss Selwyn? I struck against one of the swamped boats and managed to drag myself on to it. Very soon I saw the lights of another vessel, and by good luck my shouts were heard. They lowered a boat and took me aboard; and here I am, safe and sound."

"Oh, I am so glad," she said, looking up at him through eyes brimful of tears. "I was afraid that I might never—see——"

"Then you do care a little?" he asked eagerly, taking her hands in his. "Is it true, Ethel? Dare I believe what your eyes are saying?"

"Yes," she replied softly. "I was a foolish little girl then, but you—you are a Man."

Frank H. Temple.

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WHEN THE DEAD COME TO LIFE.

A Woman's Way of Winning.

Unlike a certain character in one of Marryat's novels, who had been a prince in his own country, the sergeant had been a scoundrel. The day in the Indian station had been very hot, and through the middle of it the men had lain around the quarters reviling the orderly because the supply of soda-water had run out, and it was sultry even at dusk.

The sergeant had changed his uniform for a suit of stable clothes, for the sake of coolness, and was lying out on the grass in front of the quarters, smoking and listening to the regimental band playing in the centre of the parade ground.

In the beginning the band had struck up a "clog," and had been noisely applauded by howls and whistles and stamping of feet from the enlisted men, and by clapping of hands from the officers' line. Then the German in the band-leader peeped out and made him give a selection from Wagner, and growls and uncomplimentary remarks came from the enlisted men. However, at the end of it a select party of the rank in front of the major's bungalow, who knew good music when they heard it, clapped in applause, and the file, coming to the conclusion that, after all, there must have been something good in what they had misnamed a series of badly-executed catcalls, joined in the applause enthusiastically; whereupon the fat, square old band-leader had delightfully made the band played the piece over a gain, and there had been no applause after the second rendering of Wagner—only undertone observations.

A rickshaw went past, but the sergeant was dreamily watching the lights on the band-stand twinkling through the trees and did not turn his head. Rickshaws often went up to the barracks, especially after "lights out," though generally then they stopped behind the quarters, and bands of more or less riotous soldiery out of them. But this rickshaw went opposite the orderly-room door, and drew up there, and a lady got out of it. The sergeant heard her voice as she inquired:

"Is Sergeant Robert Brown in this troop?" and he jumped to his feet with an oath, and stood leaning against a tree, biting at the stem of his pipe savagely. Then the voice again:

"Thanks. I will not trouble you. Over there?" and she came towards him.

So far as the woman was concerned there was only one enlisted man in the Army; so far as the sergeant was concerned there was only one woman coming. Her hands were out-stretched. but he put his behind his back.

"Madge Vanness," he said bitterly, "cannot a man rest quietly in his grave?"

"Jack Trevor," she began.

And old Stokes, the farrier, from a point of vantage, growled:

"There! Ain't I bin tellin' ye all 'long? I knowed his name wasn't Brown any more 'n mine is. He's one o' them bloomin' younger sons what's had a row with his guvnor."

"Jack Trevor," went on the woman, "I want proof that you are a dead man."

The sergeant laughed.

"Proof? You can find my epitaph written in unpaid bills over the face of half a dozen countries. Isn't that enough?"

"Don't be silly," said the woman curtly. "Granted you are dead—and you are not—why don't you resurrect yourself? Why don't you work?"

"Work! I am working. I'm drilling recruits, and that's hard enough. It's no good, Madge," he said obstinately. "You had better have stayed away. I'm happy enough."

The woman flushed dangerously.

"John Trevor, I have come thousands of miles, all alone, to find you, and you tell me you are happy, and that I had better not have come!"

"Well"—bitterly—"what would you have me say? Ask you to marry me?"

"Yes!" frankly.

The sergeant laughed again.

"Lord, I can imagine it. The dishonourable sergeant, and the Honourable Mrs. Brown."

"Bother the Honourable!" broke in the woman.

"Carried on the troop returns and drawing their monthly rations, one pound of bread per day, one pound of fresh meat, including bone—don't forget the bone—an ounce and a fraction of coffee, and so on, and living in a tumbledown wooden hovel, and you taking in the troop washing at two and six a month per man, and baking pies, which I should peddle to the men in quarters on credit until pay day. Oh, the prospect is fine." Then, with another laugh. "And twice a week you would go in for an airing round the post pushing the perambulator—maybe a double one. One of the fellows in the troop has a double one. And once a week you will wear your Sunday clothes, a nightmare of a bonnet, and a tight, shiny black dress with tremendous sleeves, and go to church. Don't you like the picture?" sneeringly. "Of course you'd be very happy, and I should be very contented. It goes without saying. No. I don't think you've thought much about the bargain or you wouldn't make this offer."

"John Trevor," she said, "since I left London, I have not allowed myself to sleep because of thinking of this thing. Now you tell me I haven't thought of it?"

The sergeant smiled grimly. He had been in the habit of taking to his bunk and resolutely closing his eyes to keep from thinking.

Then the woman, pleadingly:

"Jack, you know this thing would not be as you say. We should not have to stay here; I have something, if you have not."

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"Yes, that would be better still. I'm the class of man that should marry an heiress—without a penny, without even a character."

"When God placed you in the world, dear," said the woman gently, "he gave you a strong man's heritage, health and strength and the whole world to live in. Won't you come? Let us go away together somewhere and make a home."

The sergeant shook his head sorrowfully.

"No, Madge, I won't do it, for your sake, not for mine. If I worked my fingers to the bone, could I ever pay those men I ran away from when the grey broke his neck and my fortune at that water jump?"

The woman smiled to herself in the darkness.

"Jack, didn't you ever hear how much your horses brought when they were sold?"

"No; I've heard nothing, seen no man, seen nothing, not even a line, as to the old life. Let's see, there were ten of them—without the grey. Probably they made a thousand pounds."

The smile was still on the woman's lips.

"Yes," she said quietly, "one thousand pounds each. And they paid all your debts. You owe no man anything."

"One thousand pounds each!" the sergeant gasped. "What fool bought them?"

"I bought them. I sent Walters, the horse dealer, up to the sale with orders to start the bidding for each at five hundred pounds. It nearly spoilt Walters' reputation, but it saved yours. So now, you see"—unsteadily—"I'm not such an heiress after all."

She had stepped back into the light of the only lamp on the company parade and taken her hat off.

"Come, Jack," softly; "yes, dear, come."

She was holding out her hands again, and the light showed the tears in her eyes. The band was playing "In Old Madrid."

Longingly through the dusk came the music to the lines:

Come, my love, the stars are shining,
Time is flying, love is sighing,
Come, for thee a heart is pining,
Here, alone, I wait for thee.

The sergeant turned and shouted over to a chum, and his voice was joyous:

"Sanders, can you tell me where to find the colonel? I want to purchase my discharge."

Overhead, old Stokes was saying:

"I tell ye, that woman's as full of tricks as she can possibly be. Did ye see her step back in the light an' take her hat off an' show she was cryin'? That was nothin' but a gran' stan' play. Nothin'. She knowed it 'ud fetch him, 'an so it did."

Harry Pollitt.

THE CURTAIN HAS RISEN

On the great drama "AS A MAN SOWS." The first acts may be enjoyed by securing a copy of* PEARSON'S WEEKLY *to-day. No more powerful and realistic life story has ever been before the public. You are missing what hundreds of thousands are enjoying if you fail to start reading at once.

A Spelling Romance.

About a month ago a young couple in Brixton were married. The wedding was a quiet one, as the bride's family were in mourning on account of the recent death of the bride's mother's great aunt. After dinner, the shedding of tears, the throwing of old shoes, and similar nuptial ceremonies had been performed, the young couple proceeded to the modest cottage which was to be their home—delicious thought—their home.

A week after, the two young people were sitting in the dusky parlour testing the carrying capacity of one chair, when, naturally, they happened to remember that at that very moment a great spelling tournament was raging at a hall near by. After saying that each would rather be where he or she was than at the hall, and so on, the turtle-doves organised a spelling tournament of their own. The reward of merit was kisses, and the condign penalties for errors were severe hugs. Presently the newly-made bride asked the newly-made groom to spell "impenetrable," and he spelled it "i-m-p-e-n-e-t-r-e-b-l-e."

"Oh, you great goose," blithely said the sole partner of his home and heart; "you educated at a good school and can't spell 'impenetrable.'"

This nettled the head of the family, and he asked her how she spelt it.

"I-m-p-e-n-e-t-r-i-b-l-e."

"That's the worst I ever heard," said he, "for a young woman who pretends to have moved in society, and been at Girton."

"Pretends!" remarked the bride, on whose cheek two scarlet spots could be seen glowing in the dark (for the lamp had been turned down very low); "pretends!" she echoed, as she left his knee for a rocking-chair, and began to rock herself vigorously and fan herself with her handkerchief. "My father never was a tailor, and I cannot remember that my mother ever took in washing."

"Possibly not," retorted the husband, with forced calmness, "but at least my father always paid his debts, and my mother's bridal trousseau, if plain, was paid for."

At this point her mother entered the room. Edwin stated that he hoped to find in the Desert of Sahara present distraction and speedy death, while Angelina remarked that though she looked perfectly horrible in black and detested veils, she would to a nunnery go. The mother-in-law, after some difficulty, induced them to tell the cause and manner of their separation.

"Madam," said Edwin, "I cannot live with a woman who spells 'impenetrable' with an 'i.'"

"Did you really do that, my dear?" said the mother-in-law to the weeping wife.

"Yes," she sobbed.

"That was wrong, that was wrong," she replied.

"So I told her," stated the husband; "but she said she could not safely trust her happiness with a man who spelt it with an 'e.'"

"Ah!" said the mother-in-law, "that is the way you spelt it, is it?"

"It is."

"Then you are both wrong; it should be spelt with a 'u'!"

"Edwin!"

"Angelina!"

Like torrents from one mountain source they rushed into each other's arms.

G. P. N.

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THE MAKING OF A MUSICIAN.

A STORY OF MONTE CARLO.

He was a dismal failure. Had he chosen to be anything else but a composer and a writer of songs it is probable that Farran would have done as well as it is given to most men to do. But he had yearned to be a musician, he had wrestled with Nature until, reluctantly, she let him have his way, and the curse of a granted prayer was on him.

His soul delighted in music, and although he wrote with surprising ease nobody bought his work, for he lacked the divine spark which men call genius—he was not even talented.

Farran was growing old. For years his implicit belief in himself had buoyed him up against constant, inevitable failure, and now slowly, with increasing age, the truth was dawning upon him with cruel, heart-rending force—he had mistaken intense appreciation for the great gift of creation. His compositions would never move the world to smiles or tears, for they were without the mystic breath of life which no man can define, and which the hand of the Master alone can bestow.

He had watched with patient suffering the cruel stakes of failure driven into the nervous quicksand of his life's ambition, confident that the day would come when on that sunken pile his success would stand at last. Now, by the light of sudden revelation, he saw what his friends had secretly foretold, that the lofty fabric of his hopes and aspirations would never rise to fly the proud flag of immortal fame, nor fame at all.

It was too late now for him to choose another profession, and he was filled with sadness so intense that it would have driven many a weaker man to seek relief or oblivion in death. But Farren was no craven. A man of morals, quietly religious, self-contained, untiringly industrious, charged with inexhaustible long-suffering, of sweet and even temper, a good friend and no man's enemy, he bore up manfully against the blow which shattered all that seemed to him worth living for.

If Farran had not possessed some slender private means he could not have left Florence every winter to stay at Monte Carlo, for Nature's earthly paradise, in the midst of which Humanity has placed its Inferno, is an expensive spot to live in, even though you know, by stern necessity, the cheapest ways and means.

In the whole of his life Farran had never risked a penny at a game of chance, partly on principle and partly because he never could afford it, but as the gambler is drawn to the tables, or the moth to the flame, so Farran was drawn to the concert-room where the finest orchestra in the world plays twice a day free to all comers.

It was life, joy, and happiness, everything to him to sit and revel in the strains of all the masters he worshipped, rendered as they are rendered nowhere else, North, South, East, and West.

It was evening, and the sun had slowly disappeared behind the mountains, leaving the sky and sea all rosy in its passing. Here the rocky peaks reflected the golden light with which the West was flooded, and there in sullen blackness stood out against the purple of the East.

The afternoon concert was over and a thin stream of

The cool air made him shiver and draw his cloak more closely round him.

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men and women were pouring out of the Casino doors, and scattering themselves at the little tables outside the café listening to the band and drinking tea, despite the doctor's warning to keep indoors at sunset.

About the last to come out was Farran, poorly clad as ever, and walking slowly, his thin face lit up with enthusiasm and softly humming the refrain of some piece that had for him a special charm. His soul was filled with the heavenly music, and though the cool air made him shiver and draw his cloak more closely round him, yet his heart within was warm as ever.

He wandered up the smooth gravel paths through the midst of the tropical gardens where the fountains play, and stayed a moment to watch the sun-browned peasants who were covering the gaily-painted flowers with matting to save them from the frost. For a moment he envied the men whose duty began and ended with the tending of those fragile plants which scented the soft sea-breeze with their delicate fragrance, they knew no aspirations, they feared no blight.

A wave of inexpressible sadness, almost of rebellion, surged through him, stirring the very depths of his wounded heart. Why should he be endowed with an ambition he could not fulfil? Why should Providence give him the desire and withhold the means of gratifying it? Could endless industry and perseverance never make up for the genius Nature would not impart? Where was the eternal justice of which men speak when all things smile upon them, where the good things which come to those who wait?

His hands were clenched, his teeth firmly set, and he gazed with unseeing eyes over the most beautiful panorama of the world.

For one brief moment so, and then with a sad sigh he turned and hurried onward towards the town, driving the unworthy thoughts away, and repenting bitterly that he should have listened to them even so long.

Over a grocer's shop in a little side street, Farran had found two comfortable rooms where the rent was low and he could have what simple food he needed.

He ran upstairs two steps at a time and opened the sitting-room door. The lamps had not yet been brought in. On the threshold he stopped suddenly, for standing in the middle of the room with a frightened look in his eye like a hunted stag at bay was a young man.

The stranger started impetuously forward, and then shrank back embarrassed.

Farran saw that he was in distress, and was immediately filled with pity, like the good-hearted, honest fellow that he was.

"Good evening. Can I do anything for you?" he said, in his friendly way, laying his hat and cloak on the table.

His voice was kindly and full of sympathy. A look of sudden gratitude sprang into the young man's eyes, chasing away the terror. He tried to speak, but, overcome with a sudden fit of faintness, he reeled slightly backwards, and then sank into a chair and dropped his head on his arms.

Farran sprang to his side. He was genuinely frightened. He had not the least idea what to do in an emergency of the kind.

Bending over, he touched the intruder on the shoulder, and vainly waited for some signs of returning consciousness. Then he went off to his bedroom, and hunted among his things for a flask of brandy, and some of this he forced with nervous fingers down the poor fellow's throat, fanning his bloodless cheeks with a blotting-pad.

Presently the boy groaned, and then opened his eye

Young as he was, his handsome face was marred with traces of dissipation, and his thin, white lips, were strangely out of keeping with his broad chin, and high, intellectual forehead.

Farran put his arm round the half-unconscious stranger, and half led, half carried him to a sofa. He muttered a word of thanks, and the moment his head touched the pillow fell asleep.

Some men would have been stirred with indignation at such an intrusion, but Farran was only embarrassed and full of sympathy for the poor fellow. When his friend Jameson came in a few minutes later he was quite angry with Farran for what he had done.

"You idiot!" he said. "Why didn't you turn the rascal out into the street? He's only come here to borrow money of you. I know him well by sight. He's been loafing round here for three or four months borrowing money from everyone. He is simply half drunk now, which is his normal condition. The beggar's the most inveterate gambler I know, and they say he hasn't put a penny on the table which he has obtained honestly for the last three years. I'll help you carry him down if you like and chuck him out."

Farran was deeply pained at his friend's cynicism, and indignantly refused to do anything of the kind.

"He's going to stop here for a time," he said. "I'm not going to send him away until I know what he came for. Perhaps he means to turn over a new leaf; perhaps he is starving—who knows?"

"Please yourself, my good Samaritan," said Jameson, with a shrug of his shoulders. "You'll be sorry you did not listen to my warning some day." And then he sat down at the piano and sang Farran's latest song with such exquisite feeling that one almost forgot it fell short of being clever. Tears trembled in Farran's eyes as he grasped his friend's hand.

"How I envy you your genius," he said, and then his voice broke suddenly, and he was glad that the sleeping man stirred, and asked for a drop of water to moisten his burning lips.

Presently Farran was left alone with the stranger. He was very penitent—all gamblers are when they have lost. He had not touched a scrap of food all day, and every penny in the world he could call his own had fallen to the croupier's relentless rake.

He gladdened Farran's heart with promises of reform; he wanted to turn over a new leaf, but his luck was against him and he could not make a start. Farran was deeply moved, and when the poor fellow said he had nowhere to sleep that night it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to make him a bed of some sort on the sofa.

In the morning he managed to scrape together two pounds, which the young fellow eagerly accepted; he could not afford to spare much, but if one of them had to be short, well, no doubt, he was able to stand it best.

The stranger, whose name was Charlie Day, turned out to be blacker than Jameson had painted him, but, black as he was, without one redeeming feature, he had in him that tiny spark of genius for which Farran would have almost given his life.

Three days after his first appearance the young man turned up again. He said he had hunted for work and could find none, an unlikely fiction which even Farran refused to believe and Jameson said he had seen Day playing roulette that morning.

Farran at first was disgusted, but he could not bear to see one so young going to the dogs. He tried to find out where the boy lived and who his people were, but

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all that Charlie Day would say was that he was waiting for money to be sent from England, and he dared not go until it came.

And so Farran asked him to stay with him, and so the strange acquaintance was continued and grew almost into friendship. The two men lived together, the one good and the other bad. No one else in the world would have stood the presence of the young drunkard and his behaviour. He bullied Farran, imposed on him, acted as if the rooms were his, and treated the food and the shelter he got as if he had a right to them. Sometimes he would plead for a little money, promising to repay every penny when his own came out, but on this point Farran was firm.

How the musician managed to share his living with another his friends could not imagine, and they supposed he starved himself to feed the other mouth, which in truth he did.

He was very happy in his self-imposed task, trying to reform the young fellow who had so strangely crossed his path. It was a new experience for him, taking a concern in something outside himself, and a little plan had suggested itself which gave a new interest in life.

He would try and save enough money to pay Charlie Day's passage back to England, and so remove him for ever from the temptations of the Casino, which had already threatened to ruin his young life. Every penny he could he put by, and he composed music, such as his soul delighted in, although it appealed to nobody else, and sold it for what it would fetch. One morning he was sitting at his desk and copying out some music, and Day was lying at full length on the sofa, and reading a book on Systems.

From where he sat he commanded a view of the sea, and the Mediterranean without a wave, without a shudder, was like a sun-pierced plate of coloured glass in a cathedral window, so blue, so motionless, and so wondrous bright.

He was gazing out watching a little yacht flying away towards the shadowy mountains of Corsica, and leaving behind it a trail of silver foam, when suddenly an idea as if by inspiration entered his head and filled him with surprise because he had not thought of it before.

"Charlie," he said, "would you like me to give you some lessons in harmony, to teach you to compose?"

Day looked at him for a moment in utter amazement. He had been begging for money that morning, and afterwards for drinks, and he was in a nasty temper.

"Teach me! You confounded old idiot," he said; "you offer to give me lessons? What do you know about harmony, you who have never sold a song?"

He swung his legs off the sofa, and got up and stretched himself.

Then he crossed over to the piano, which he had never touched before.

Lightly his fingers wandered over the keys, and Farran marvelled at the touch, so exquisite, so full of feeling. Then the boy's eyes fell on the words of a waltz-song which Farran had just composed, and which he was vainly trying to set to music.

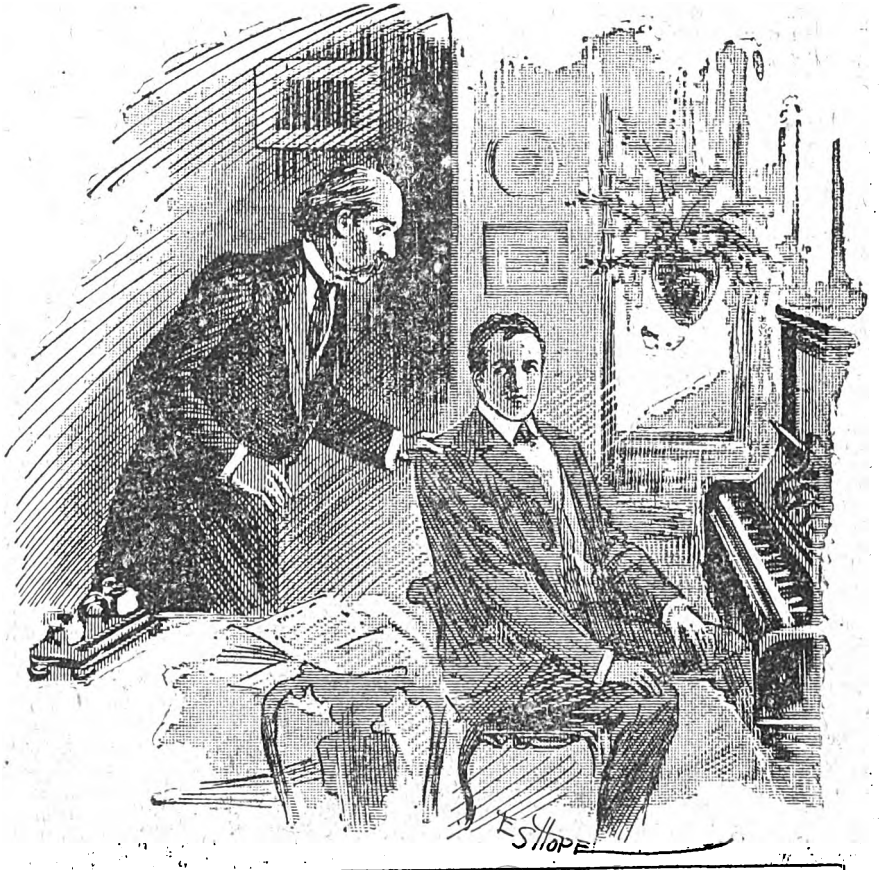
He stooped down and picked the manuscript up from the floor, where it had been thrown in a moment of disgust.

They were the cleverest lines that Farran had ever done, and they went with a wonderful swing. Day read them over once, and then strummed a bright little tune to go with them that brought poor Farran to his feet with a cry half of jealousy, half of supreme delight.

"Good Heavens!" he said, coming and standing over the piano; "is that original?"

"Of course it is," said Day with a sneer at his incredulity, but no trace of indignation in his voice. It was nothing to him to improvise a tune like that.

"Could you put that on paper?" asked Farran eagerly. He was very excited, and his breath came quickly.



"Good Heavens!" he said, coming and standing over the piano, "is that original?"

Day did not deign to answer. He got up with an exclamation of impatience and seized a piece of paper.

"I'll show you what composing is," he said.

With wonderful quickness he picked out the notes with his left hand, and put them down with his right.

Farran stood over him fascinated, and watching.

The boy half finished the tune, played it over again, wrote out what he had done more fully, and then he stopped.

"That's the way it ought to be done," he said, getting up suddenly. He seemed to think little enough of his work.

"Go on; finish it, boy, finish it!" said Farran. "It's splendid! It's superb!"

Day looked at him for a minute.

"It's not worth it," he said. Then seeing the look in the other's face, he said: "Get me some brandy; then I'll go on with it."

Farran hesitated. Then he decided that such a tune ought not to be lost to the world for the unfulfilled caprice of a wayward boy. He went into his room and brought his flask. The boy flushed with pleasure as he took it, and poured out a stiff dose in a tumbler.

He tossed it off like water, and the snatching up the pen began working again at the tune, and Farran sat at his side wondering, and occasionally drumming the air on the table with his fingers. "Capital," he said from time to time, "capital." He would have given anything he possessed in the world, and that was little enough, to have the gift this gambling, drunken boy trifled with and scorned.

Presently the score was finished, and Day covered it with the blotting paper, crossing his arms over it.

"When you think of offering lessons again," he said, "just look at this and learn modesty."

Farran held out his hand.

"Let me see it," he asked.

"More brandy first," said the boy.

Farran thought he had drunk quite enough and said so.

Day held out in his request, and, finally got up with an oath, and threw the manuscript in a box which he had appropriated for his things. Then he took down his hat and went out of the room, leaving Farran, his benefactor, wrathful and sad.

How long Farran sat there he did not know, but when the landlord brought in the lunch, he got up feeling years older than he had before. It was the bitterest blow of all to see someone else wasting those precious talents which were to him all that life was worth living for.

He could not touch the food which was placed before him, and he pushed back his chair with a weary sigh, and crossed over to the large bow window which overlooked the red roofs of the town. He knew Day well enough by this time to know that he could never persuade him to make use of his wonderful gift so long as he was within reach of those fascinating tables.

He must get him back to England, but as yet his little savings would not take the boy half way to Paris. Then the idea of borrowing from his friends to add to his little savings entered his head.

He had never done such a thing before in his life, although he had many times been in need, but now it was different.

Ten minutes later he was standing with a flush of shame on his cheeks, and talking to Jameson in the hall of the Metropole. He would not say what he wanted the money for, otherwise he knew the loan would be promptly refused. It was a cruel blow to his pride to find himself begging for alms, but by the sacrifice he hoped to save an erring, wayward soul.

When he reached his rooms again he took from his desk the little pile of gold he had saved and wrapped it in the notes his friend had lent.

It would leave the boy something when he reached his journey's end.

When Day came in that evening and saw the money his eyes sparkled, and he seized Farran's hand and thanked him passionately again and again. Once he got back to England he would return to his people, and tearfully he promised he would settle down and take up some profession. He said he had given up expecting the remittance which was to have come for him.

They spent this evening together quietly, and in the morning Farran took the boy to the tourist office and left him there to get his ticket. He promised to come down to the train and see him off.

Then he went back to his rooms and threw himself on his bed, for his head was aching. He did not repent for a moment the sacrifice he had made, but how he could ever pay back his debts he did not know, and for the present he must starve. The sun was pouring in through the windows, the heat was suffocating, and presently he fell asleep.

When he awoke the room was nearly dark. He sprang off his bed and looked at his watch. It was five o'clock. So Day was already on his way to England, and he had not said good-bye. Well, perhaps, after all, it was better so.

If he went at once he would be in time for the evening concert at the Casino, and without stopping to drink the cup of tea that was waiting for him in his sitting-room, he took up his hat.

Suddenly something fell against the door; it burst inward, and Day, staggering forward, fell at the feet of the astonished musician. He was drunk. Farran picked him up with a feeling of loathing, and carried him on to the sofa, where he lay just as he had on the first evening he had come.

He had never had the least intention of going back to England, and he had gone to the Casino as soon as Farran's back was turned, and, favoured by a stroke of luck, had turned that precious little pile of notes into three thousand pounds.

Then he had gone out, half intoxicated with the gambler's fever, and ordered a bottle of champagne. The sparkling wine was refreshing, and he called for a second bottle, and while he was drinking his pockets had been picked of every farthing he had made, except a little silver.

Drunk as he was, the discovery suddenly sobered him, and frightened of Farran's wrath, he was driven almost to despair. He got up and staggered towards the sea, then, with a laugh at his own fear, he went back and ordered another bottle of wine—and then he fell asleep. Nature can be trifled with once too often, and this time Day had reached the end to his tether. No man can afford to fall asleep at sunset in the open air after coming from the overheated gaming rooms.

It was dark when he woke, and he was shivering in every limb when he reached Farran's rooms. He said at once, "I am going to die, old man. I am frightfully ill. I feel it in every bone, in every muscle."

And then he related his success in the gaming rooms with a ring of triumph in his voice, and not one word of repentance, and fell back exhausted.

All night Farran sat up watching over the boy as he

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tossed from side to side, and although they called in a doctor, before morning came he had fallen asleep for ever, muttering between his lips his lucky numbers at the tables.

When the sun rose next morning Farran's hair was almost grey. He was a man of extremely nervous temperament, and the strain had been too much for him. He had done his best, and seemingly failed absolutely, as he had failed in everything he had attempted in life. He had not enough in the world even to bury his friend, and the authorities came and carried the poor boy's body away.

Everything was going wrong with Farran. The harder he tried to live up to the principles that guided him the greater was his failure. Was there no such thing as eternal justice, then?

And that night he was stricken with the fever that had carried Charlie Day from this world of temptation.

For three weeks he lay at the gate of death, and then slowly recovered. The doctor watched him anxiously during those days of convalescence, for in his heart of hearts he feared that Farran might never recover his reason.

But his fears proved unfounded, for in a few months' time the musician was quite himself again, nobly prepared to pay off the debts he had incurred.

He must have some money, and at once, to pay his rent and his doctor's bill. Then he remembered the words of the song he had intended to set to the tune of a waltz and he hunted in his room to find them. Nowhere could he lay his hands upon them.

Presently his eye fell upon the little box in which his poor friend had kept his worldly possessions. He stooped down and drew it out from under the sofa covered with dust.

There was the precious manuscript and beneath it, carelessly crumpled, the music the drunken boy had composed.

Farran straightened himself with a throbbing heart, and at that moment Jameson opened the door.

"Look!" said Farran, holding it out before the other had time to congratulate him on being up for the first time since his illness.

Jameson took it and settled himself at once at the music stool.

He played it over once and his face lit up with enthusiasm.

"Do you mean to tell me that drunken wretch did this?" he shouted. "It's superb! It's magnificent! It'll be the rage directly it's published! Look here, old man, give me a twentieth part of the profits and I'll pay your expenses over to England as soon as you are strong enough to move, and finance the thing myself if you can dictate your own terms."

* * * *

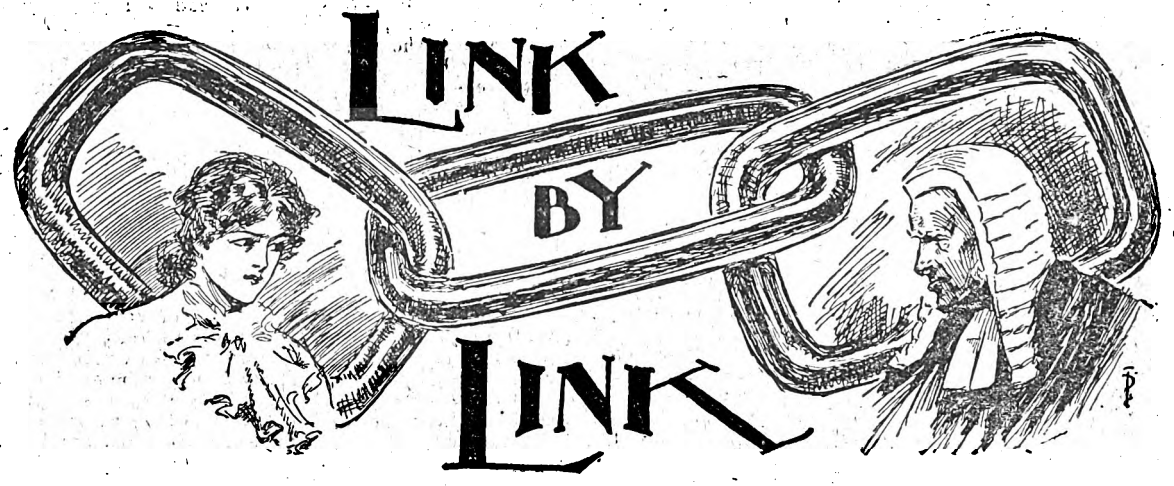
Six months have passed since the waltz-song was published, and throughout the whole of Europe it is heard at every dance and sung in every drawing-room. The musical world declared it to be the finest thing of the century, and the printing presses are still turning copies out. Already Farran has made over £10,000.

The drunken boy had passed away, but the work of his genius remained spurned and forgotten in that little wooden box to show how blind is human foresight, and to fulfil the workings of that strange law of compensation, that eternal justice which to men seemed to have no comfort for the poor musician Farran.

But there was more than this, for money itself was little to the enthusiast. While he tossed on that bed of fever, hovering on the brink of insanity, there was secretly engrafted in him that living germ which men call genius and when the applauding world called out for more to follow the successful waltz-song he sat down and set his lines to living, speaking music. such melody as stirs the heart to its very lowest depths, and brought him that immortal fame for which his soul had yearned.

Sydney Collis.

The door burst inward, and Day, staggering forward, fell at the feet of the astonished musician.



New Readers Begin Here.

GERALD MORTIMER lives with his mother at Moulstone Manor House, where Nina Penhurst is governess to his small brother and sister. Nina is out walking one day with her two pupils when one of them discovers the dead body of a man dressed in asylum clothes with his left arm missing. Just then Gerald comes on the scene and keeps Nina from seeing the body, and immediately goes off to the asylum to tell his friend, Dr. Branksome, the medical attendant there, of the discovery, and learns from him that the murdered man's name is Cordelvin.

Nina is much agitated when she hears this, and suddenly disappears, sending Mrs. Mortimer a letter from London explaining her absence in a vague way but giving no address. Dr. Branksome receives an anonymous letter containing money to pay for Cordelvin's funeral. He shows this letter to Gerald, who at once recognises it as being in Nina's handwriting, and during Branksome's absence from the room he destroys it. In the evening he goes to London to try and find Nina, with whom he is very much in love.

While walking on the Embankment after his arrival he sees a woman in a dark blue cloak, whom he had previously seen at Moulstone the night before the murder, waiting about and muttering to herself. Thinking she may know something about the murder he speaks to her, but instead of replying she scatters some sand in his eyes and disappears.

Roderick Vanstone, Nina's legal guardian and trustee, with whom she had lived until his persecutions drove her away lives at Streatham with his son Stephen. One evening he visits a doctor in Whitechapel, whom he takes out to Streatham, where, under compulsion, he makes him amputate the left arm of a man.

Inspector Trench, of Scotland Yard, is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin. He suspects Gerald and Nina to be implicated.

After leaving Moulstone, Nina goes to stay with an old nurse at Roehampton, and one day, while sketching on Wimbledon Common, she is accosted by Stephen Vanstone, who makes love to her, and when she spurns him he attempts to throw her in a pond. Fortunately Gerald Mortimer is passing near, and, hearing screams, hurries to the spot, and prevents Vanstone from carrying out his design. He then hears from Nina her reasons for leaving Moulstone, and explains to her that she is suspected of being the murderer of Cordelvin.

Vanstone, hiding behind some shrubs, hears their conversation, and when he learns Gerald's address hurries off to his father, and together they concoct a plot for kidnapping him by sending in the evening two of their men purporting to be bearers of a message from Nina. Mortimer falls into the trap, and is chloroformed in the cab and borne off to the house at Streatham, where he is confined. When the effects of the drug are wearing off he is roused by a wild cry.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Shriek in the Night.

THE weird cry which, in the silence of the night, had sent its reverberant echoes through the old house on Streatham Hill, had, among others, the effect of restoring Gerald Mortimer to consciousness. That piercing sound beating on his ear roused his faculties and caused him to throw off, like a garment, the mental lethargy which had come upon him as the influence of the drug weakened.

He sat up and listened! No further cry reached him. He began to think he had been dreaming. His delusion was quickly dispelled, when, on attempting to move round on the bed, he realised that his hands were bound.

What did it mean? Where was he? Who had brought him here?

Slowly his awakening memory answered the questions. A man had called upon him at his chambers—he had given his name as Ned Stebbings—yes, he remembered that, and he had brought a message from Nina Penhurst—so, at least, he had said. It couldn't have been true, of course, else why was he here in a strange place with his hands bound?

No; he had been tricked! His first suspicions of his visitor to the Temple had been verified. The story of the illness of Nina Penhurst had been a ruse, a ruse to induce him to accompany Stebbings; but with what ultimate object? Enemies he had none, to his knowledge. Who, then, had employed Ned Stebbings as an emissary?

His cogitations on the subject were cut short by the door softly opening. A close-cropped head was thrust in, to be followed by the broad, thick-set form of Stebbings himself. Advancing to the table he held up the lantern aloft. Its rays fell on the bed in the corner, and disclosed the huddled-up form of Gerald. His eyes were open wide. He was staring hard at the newcomer.

"Hullo! you're awake, then, Mr. Mortimer?" inquired Stebbings, in an easy-going tone that was half politeness, half familiarity. "And you've had a good sleep, I hope?"

Gerald ignored the question; he was studying the face of his interrogator.

"Stebbings," he said presently, having satisfied himself as to the kind of man with whom he had to deal, "you have played me a trick. You pretended you came from Miss Penhurst."

The other looked innocent for a moment; then his face lapsed into a broad grin.

"Why, so I did," he admitted; "so I did. You see I had to say something to get you to come along with me."

"So I have guessed. Why have you brought me here?"

Stebbings slowly closed one eye in a laborious wink.

"That ain't for me to say, sir," he replied, "bein' only an honest servant, I merely obeys orders."

"An honest servant! Who's your master? What house is this?"

"Them's two questions, Mr. Mortimer, which I should be exceedin' my duty to give you any information about."

"But don't you know that you are aiding and abetting a crime in kidnapping me and bringing me here? Don't you know that the law can punish you very severely for it?"

"The law!" replied Stebbings in a tone of mock solemnity, "ah! that's a subject I gives yer best in, sir, seein' as you lives right among the lawyers—you're a lawyer yourself, as I understand."

There was no good in arguing with this man. His manner was too self-possessed, his answers altogether evasive, his temper absolutely imperturbable.

"Since you won't tell me what I have asked," said Gerald, after a brief pause, "perhaps you'll tell me what was that cry I heard a little time ago?"

Once more that look of feigned innocence came into Stebbings' face.

"Cry," he asked; "what cry?"

"You know very well there was a loud shriek about twenty minutes ago."

"Ah, yes! so there was!" Stebbings had thought better of his denial. "There was a shriek. Now what do you think it was?"

"It sounded," replied Gerald, "like the cry of a maniac."

"Ha! ha! ha! That's good. The cry of a maniac—what made you think that?"

Something in the man's face or voice it may have been; some subtle change in his expression; some vague uneasiness for the first time betrayed in his tone. Whatever it was, it was sufficient to set Gerald's mind on a line of thought along which it ran like a spark on a train of powder, to explode at the end with the outburst:

"Yes, like the cry of a maniac. Like the cry, for example, of Mr. Anthony Cordelvin!"

It was a shot at a venture; a shot that might have been meaningless to his hearer for all Gerald *knew*. But it was not. It went right home. It effected in the demeanour of Ned Stebbings, something like a transformation. The grin which had played banteringly about his mouth while he had bandied words with his questioner faded away like a spectre. In its place came a look of settled gloom; the look of one who has been "bowled out." His eyes took into them an expression of fury, which the man had plainly a struggle to suppress. So great a struggle that he could not trust himself to speak. For a moment he stood glaring down at Gerald Mortimer and clenching his hands as if he would like to crush the life out of him. Then with an oath, he turned on his heel and left the room, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The First False Move in the Whole Game."

Gerald Mortimer sat on his bed, staring before him in amazement.

So his chance exclamation had drawn forth a tacit admission of its truth. That was plain. No other interpretation of Stebbings' change of mien was reasonable, or even possible. That one remark had unravelled what, but a little time before, had seemed a tangled skein of mystery.

It was Anthony Cordelvin, then, who had screamed. And that being so, this must be the house of Roderick Vanstone—Nina's guardian, and the administrator of the Cordelvin estate. Roderick Vanstone was Ned Stebbings' employer, and Stebbings himself had admitted that in tricking him (Gerald) and bringing him to this place, he had but been obeying his master's orders. What did it all mean? Why had Roderick Vanstone constituted himself his enemy? They had never even met; they had never had any dealings, business or otherwise, with one another. The motive, then, for this outrage? What was it?

Certainly he had been a witness of Stephen Vanstone's attack on Nina Penhurst; but in respect to that, his evidence in an action for assault was the most formidable weapon he could raise against the Vanstone family. Fear of such a weapon as that was not sufficient to drive men to remove him out of the way by the extreme methods which they had adopted. Another motive must be searched for; something adequate, something far more serious than the obvious one.

Gerald's eyes were riveted on the dim light of the lantern as if he would find in the flickering yellow flame the way out of the maze of circumstances which enveloped his thoughts.

Of a sudden a glimmering of new intelligence lighted his eye; his brows contracted with the stress of it. In a moment the spark burst into flame; his heart bounded with excitement; his whole body quivered with the sensation of discovery. He leapt to his feet (in spite of his bound hands) with a muttered "My God!" An inclination to scream out came upon him, to be smothered by quick-following knowledge of the uselessness of such a proceeding. Imprisoned as he was in that room, he could do nothing yet. He must wait for daylight, and for Stebbings or somebody else to come to him.

To sit still was agony. Action seemed to relieve in some small measure the stress of mental excitement. He paced the room backwards and forwards for an hour, till in very weariness he sank down on his bed. The candle flame flickered, its last effort before expiring. Gerald Mortimer felt sleep coming upon his eyelids. He closed them and slept.

How long he slept he knew not. To consult his watch was beyond his physical power. But when he awoke the grey daylight was coming in through the chinks of the shuttered windows. Little time was there to resume the thoughts of his previous waking hours, for he had scarcely opened his eyes, ere a key was placed in the lock, and the handle of the door rattled. It opened to admit Stebbings and another man—Burge, the coachman of the previous night.

The entry of the men struck Gerald as more than a trifle ludicrous. Over Stebbings' right arm were a couple of towels; in his hand a piece of soap; under his left arm was an enammelled basin. Close behind him Burge walked along carrying a can of water. The explanation of these things was laconically given by Stebbings:

"To wash with, Mr. Mortimer!"

Gerald with a shrug indicated his bound hands.

"He'll untie you," explained Stebbings, nodding at his companion, "so that you can wash yourself and eat your breakfast."

A wild hope beat in Gerald's breast. Here might be a chance of escape. It was dispelled by Ned Stebbings' next words:

"The master thinks it just possible, Mr. Mortimer," he remarked, "that you might prove orkerd if you get your hands free. I'm just acting on instructions, so you'll excuse me pervidin' against accidents, I'm sure."

His hand dived into his coat pocket as he took a seat

near. The next moment he withdrew it, holding a six-chambered revolver.

"Only to be used if you prove orkerd," he added, significantly elevating it from his knee to Gerald's head. "Now then, Burge!"

The latter had Gerald's bonds off in a trice, and for a minute or two Gerald enjoyed the luxury of immersing his bruised wrists and his aching brow in the cold water. His ablutions finished, Burge brought in his breakfast, which, hungry as he was, he did more justice to than he expected. The lurking idea that hung about the recesses of his brain to make a dash for liberty now that his hands were free, was stifled effectually by a glance at that covering revolver which the alert Stebbings held.

To try to escape just at present was practically useless. He must bide his time. So he submitted quietly enough while Burge re-adjusted the bonds about his wrists, saying to Stebbings as he did so:

"How is Mr. Roderick Vanstone this morning?"

Stebbings leapt from his chair with amazement, and raised his weapon as if in instinctive self-defence. He recovered himself in a moment, however, and answered:

"Mr. Mortimer, don't you ask no questions; then you won't hear no lies."

Despite his serious predicament, Gerald could not refrain from a half-smile of amusement.

"Oh, very well, Stebbings," he replied, "I won't ask you about Mr. Vanstone, or Mr. Cordelvin either, for that matter. Only I should like very much to see your master."

To this sally, spoken in a tone of almost playful raillery, Stebbings vouchsafed no answer. It was plain, from his constant efforts to restrain his tongue, that he was acting on instructions to remain silent. Laden with the breakfast tray, he and Burge once more made their exit from the room.

In the library at the front of the house, Roderick Vanstone was pacing the floor uneasily, a few minutes later.

"Your egregious folly, Stephen," he said to his son, who sat smoking by the side of the fire, "in attacking that girl has brought us into a nice mess."

His son emptied his mouth of smoke.

"I am surprised, father," he added superciliously, "that a man of your undoubted capacity and experience, has not yet realised the futility of crying over spilt milk."

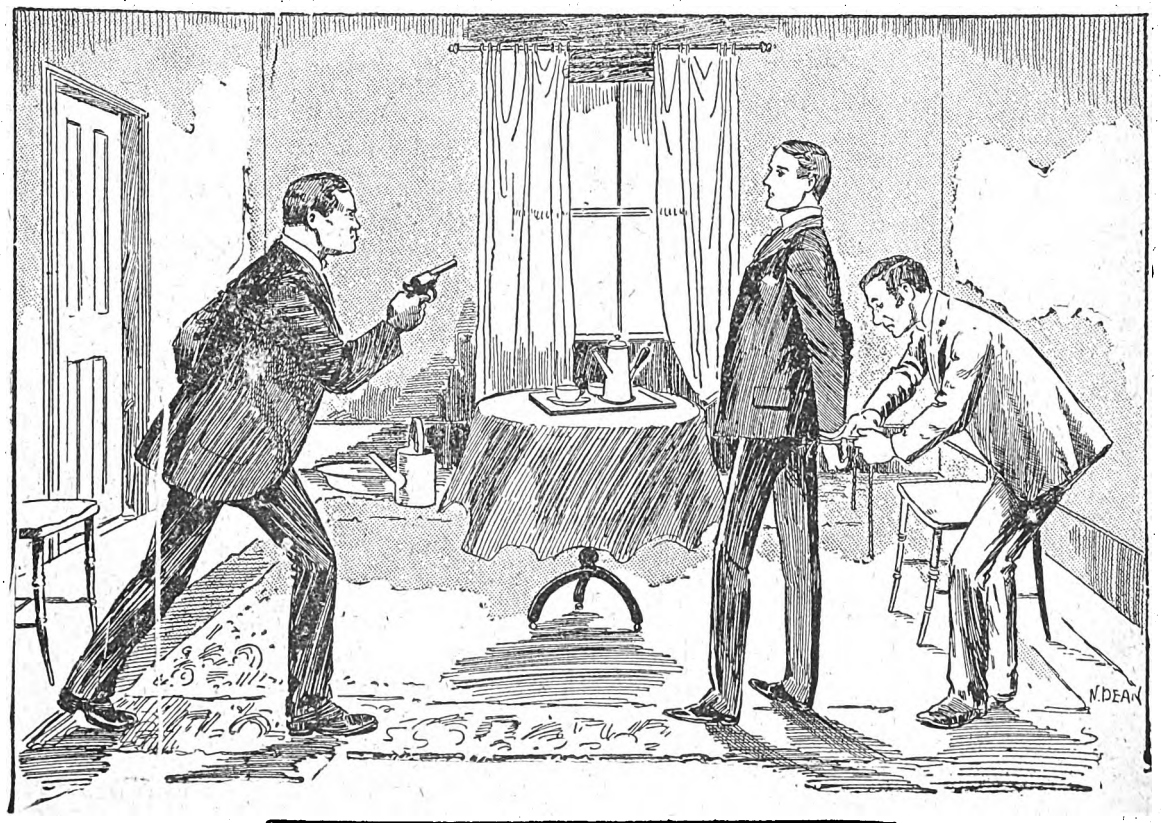
"Stephen," reproved Roderick Vanstone a little sternly, "the sooner you learn to probe your brain and think for yourself, instead of merely allowing fragments of questionable wisdom to hit the top of it and bounce off, the better it will be for you.

"I was saying," he went on, "that your folly has led to difficulties. It has made me make a false move—the first false move in the whole game."

Stephen removed his cigar from his lips, and his eyes from the fire.

"Why, what do you mean?" he asked, looking up. "What false move have you made?"

"The bringing of Gerald Mortimer to this house. He hasn't seen me, he hasn't seen you, and yet he guesses



Stebbings leapt from his chair with amazement, and raised his weapon as if in instinctive self-defence.

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where he is. I have just discovered so from Stebbings!"

Stephen looked up in genuine astonishment.

"How on earth did he find out?" he asked.

"Heaven only knows; but he has. He actually told Stebbings that that scream last night came from Anthony Cordelvin, and this morning inquired after me."

"The dickens he did! Why, he's never seen you, let alone Cordelvin—Anthony Cordelvin! He's only guessing!"

Roderick Vanstone looked at his son with something like contempt in his eyes.

"Guessing, yes, probably; but can't you see that a guess, providing it's right, is the same thing as absolute knowledge. He's guessed correctly, and the first thing he'll do will be to verify his guess."

"What if he does?" observed Stephen, "Supposing he proves right up to the hilt that you live here, and that Anthony Cordelvin is in your charge here, it amounts to nothing. Doesn't everybody in the neighbourhood know who lives here?"

"Yes; but everybody in the neighbourhood won't be wondering why we have kidnapped a man. But Gerald Mortimer will, because he is that man. He'll inquire, I tell you, and he'll move Heaven and earth to find out the truth. And if he should happen to come face to face with Cordelvin——"

"What then? He has never seen him!"

"No, he hasn't. But, remember, he was the man who discovered the dead body at Moulstone; he saw the dead man's face; he saw the body lacking an arm! Ah! you begin to see my meaning now! I tell you we are in an awkward position. I wish to Heaven I had never had the fellow brought to this place!"

The elder man paced the room more restlessly than ever. The younger puffed away at his cigar, trying to tackle the situation. But his brain was not equal to the task. The best he could do was to murmur presently:

"We've got the fellow safe, haven't we, and he can't make inquiries so long as he's kept in that room?"

The elder man swept round on him almost fiercely.

"How long do you think we can keep him here?" he demanded. "Why, when he finds that time goes on, and he is no nearer release, he'll fight and shout and give us no end of trouble. I know—or I can guess—the kind of man he is."

"That may be," assented Stephen Vanstone. "He may do all you say and more. He may scream and fight, and do all manner of awkward things, but we can stop that!"

"How?"

Stephen Vanstone raised his right hand, drew the forefinger straight across his throat, and gave utterance to a clicking sound with his tongue. "It would be quite simple," he added.

Roderick Vanstone threw out his hand in a gesture of impatience.

"You talk of murder," he said, "as if it were the easiest thing in the world. No; such an extreme measure must not be resorted to, at any rate, yet. I must have time to think. Perhaps I may hit on a way yet. Meantime, Cordelvin must have his exercise."

He stepped to the wall and rang a bell. Ned Stebbings presently appeared.

"See that the gates are locked," Roderick Vanstone directed, as was his usual morning custom, "and then take Mr. Cordelvin into the grounds. Of course, you'll keep your eye on him."

"Yes, sir," replied Stebbings. "An' I beg pardon, sir, but Mr. Cordelvin's got a new sort of notion this morning. Thinks 'e's to be Lord Mayor of London next year. I've been humourin' of 'im, sir, as usual, and told him you was arrangin' about 'is clothes."

"Very well. Bring Mr. Cordelvin in to me for a moment, before you go out."

Stebbings departed. A few minutes later the door was opened, and in walked a tall, grey-haired man with lank, cadaverous face, and strangely-bright eyes that seemed to be continuously rolling in their sockets. He walked in with a ludicrous affectation of pomp, his right arm rigid across his breast. His left sleeve hung empty; no arm was there. There was a smile of condescension on his face, and an air of patronage as he extended a couple of fingers to Roderick Vanstone.

"Good morning, Mr. Anthony," observed the latter.

"Ah! good morning, Vanstone, and good morning to you, boy." He nodded briefly to Stephen, who had risen on his approach.

"And how are you this morning, Mr. Anthony?" inquired the elder Vanstone deferentially. "Good night you had, I hope?"

"Not so good, Vanstone," replied the lunatic, "not so good. Delegates, delegates, deputations, congratulatory messages all the night—very disturbing."

"I'm sorry you're so pestered, Mr. Anthony."

"Thanks, Vanstone! Mr. Anthony *now*," he said with a slight upward wave of his one hand. "'*My Lord*' next year. You know about it? My robes, Vanstone, my robes; they are being prepared?"

Roderick Vanstone nodded.

"The tailors are at them day and night. They will be magnificent. So will your equipage."

"Ah! that's most important."

"Quite so. Well, what do you say to Polar bear-skins as horse-rugs. I have dispatched a party to the North Pole to obtain them."

The strangely-bright eyes of the poor demented man rolled more than ever with delight.

"Admirable, Vanstone," he said, "admirable. You are a faithful servant. I must do something for you. Wait for my year of office, Vanstone, wait for my year of office."

He walked, still with that curious pomposity of manner, towards the door as he spoke, and intimated his intention of going into the grounds. Mr. Vanstone bowed with mock veneration. The door closed behind the maniac.

Roderick Vanstone looked at his son and smiled. "There's not much doubt about him," he said, "he's as mad as a March hare."

Stephen Vanstone nodded in acquiescence. "How like——" he said, and nodded again with a significance that finished his sentence.

"Wonderful, isn't it?" exclaimed the elder man; "more wonderful every day."

There was a silence for a minute; then Stephen spoke again:

"I've been wondering, father," he said, "what we should do if Nina Penhurst should request to see Cordelvin."

"It's scarcely likely she will," the other retorted; "there was very little love lost between her and Anthony when she lived here, you must remember. You know how he used to storm at her and revile her, and how she used to fly from his presence with fear in her eyes. No; it's scarcely likely that she'll ever come."

"But supposing she should turn up?"

"Well, if she insisted on seeing him, we should have to allow her for appearance sake. I should explain to her that his mind had weakened considerably lately, that Cordelvin is far more mad than he used to be, and, well, since she saw him, she'd find that such was the case, wouldn't she? Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" echoed the son. "She would indeed, father. Why, she'd hardly recognise him, would she, and of course he's too mad now to recognise her. Ha! ha! ha!"

His hilarity was checked by his father's warning finger.

"I hope the girl doesn't come bothering here, nevertheless," said Roderick Vanstone, "because she might cause trouble. She might, as a relative, agitate for his

removal to an asylum. That would be decidedly awkward." He paused a moment, and then continued:

"You see, supposing she did that, and supposing the law decided that Cordelvin is *non compos mentis*, it would probably result in some new arrangement regarding the administration of the estate. We don't want that, do we?"

"No, indeed!" replied the other, with more feeling than he had previously displayed.

"Accordingly," pursued the elder man, "we must hope that the girl won't trouble us. If she does, I must think out what is the best thing to do."

The younger man's face took on itself a downcast look.

"It seems to me," he said, "that we are skating on pretty thin ice."

"H'm!" was the other's only retort, "the more reason, then, to avoid clumsiness in our actions."

CHAPTER XV.

The Face of a Dead Man.

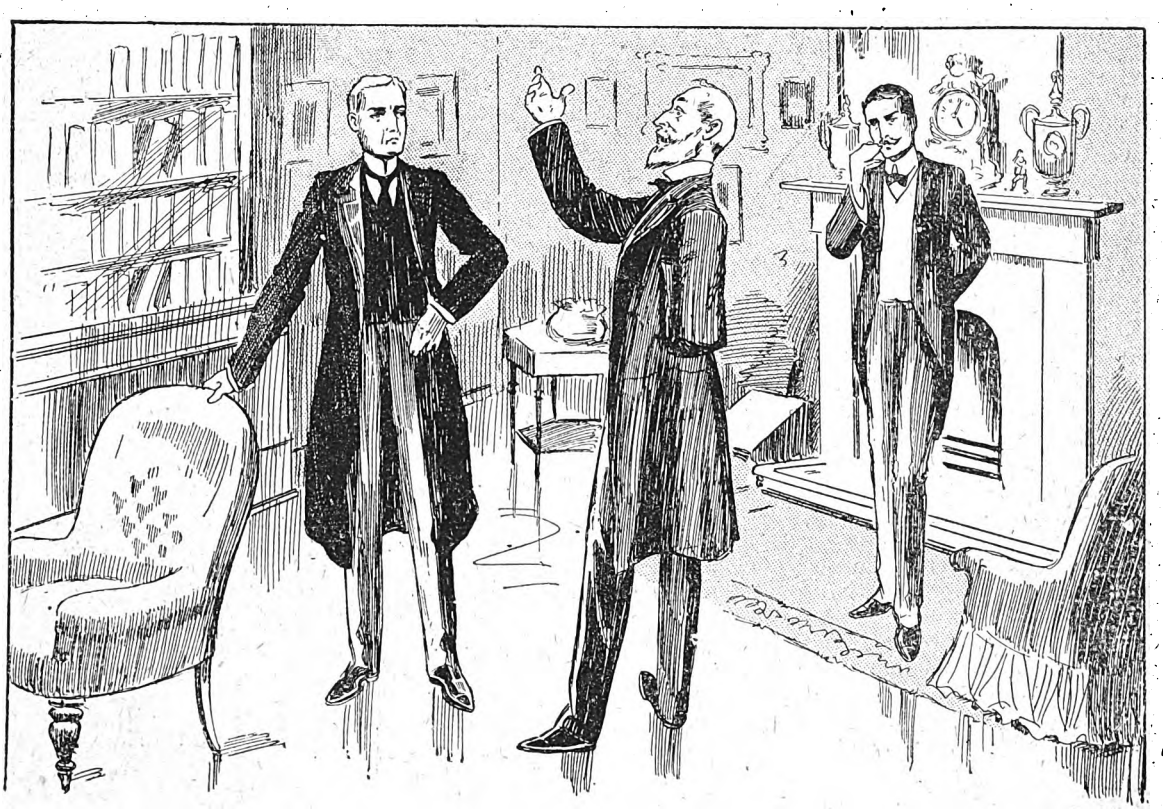
The morning passed in a bright blaze of January sunshine; luncheon was over, and now, in the afternoon, Mr. Cordelvin was once more breathing the fresh air of the grounds.

Very considerate of Mr. Cordelvin's health was Mr. Vanstone, very considerate indeed. The best of nourishment he always provided him with, and twice a day, morning and afternoon, unless the weather were altogether unpropitious, he insisted on the poor demented creature's walking in the garden. The care and solicitude which Mr. Roderick Vanstone exercised, were touching in the extreme, and it would be ungenerous to suggest that they were prompted by the fact that upon the duration of Mr. Cordelvin's life depended Mr. Vanstone's present position as administrator of the estate. Invariably, Mr. Cordelvin was accompanied—or not so much accompanied as kept in view—by either Stebbings or Burge. In the morning Stebbings had been the watch-dog; this afternoon it was Burge.

Both were faithful servitors according to their lights; but Burge had a weakness, which weakness consisted of running, whenever, in the course of the day he could get the chance, out of the grounds to the public-house at the corner of the next road. Seeing such an opportunity as he longed for, in the circumstance that Mr. Cordelvin had quietly sat himself upon a seat, from which he was gazing with the closest of interest at the house which he had recently quitted, Burge seized it, and in a trice was out of the grounds through a little side gate.

The winter sun was beginning to sink. Already it had stolen away from the house, leaving it somewhat in shadow. To the erratic fancy of Mr. Cordelvin as he sat looking upon the building, it assumed the shape and nature of the place which he had fully persuaded himself he was to occupy in a few months—the Mansion House. Dimly it occurred to him that there was something wrong. Even to his distorted memory it appeared that there ought to be steps and pillars. He approached the house with a vague idea of verifying these shortcomings. And then something caught his eye! He was at the back of the house, all the windows of which were opened to the light, except two.

That struck him as curious. Why were these two



"Thanks, Vanstone! Mr. Anthony *now*," he said with a slight upward wave of his hand, "*My Lord*, next year."

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windows different from the rest? Curiosity is just as pronounced in the insane mind as in the sane; perhaps more so. And when Mr. Cordelvin began to wonder about the windows, he at once also began casting about for a means to find out. A short ladder over near the stable caught his eye. The idea of fetching it and planting it against the window was no sooner thought of than it was carried out. There was about a foot of window-space apparent over the top of the shutters.

Mr. Cordelvin mounted the ladder, halted when he was in line with the visible glass, leant towards it, and peered in!

Ever since the morning, Gerald Mortimer had been alone in his prison-room, save for a few minutes when Stebbings and Burge had brought him in his mid-day meal. At that meal, at which reigned the same watchful conditions on the part of the armed Stebbings as had prevailed at breakfast, he had essayed no more inquiries regarding the inmates of the house. He had no desire now for converse with his gaolers. All he wanted, in his present state, was to be alone, alone with his thoughts.

Gloomy enough those thoughts had been in all conscience. Over and over again he had passed in review every circumstance, important and trivial, of the past exciting days. From that encounter with the strange woman near the asylum, he had traced the whole of his recent history right up to its present point. His proposal to Nina amid the castle ruins; the sudden cry of his young brother; the discovery of the body. Then had come Nina's flight; her letters; his journey to London; his manifold inquiries ere he had succeeded in tracing her to Roehampton; the dramatic scene near the lake on Wimbledon Common; his arrival just in the nick of time; and then, blessed memory! that blissful hour which he had spent by her side. Every little detail of his sojourn with her yesterday he recalled; every word, every look, every gesture. He had won from her a declaration of her love for him, and his heart throbbed and his blood pulsed through his veins at the recollection. Then, when he recalled his present position, he shivered at the vivid contrast.

What was to happen to him? What would happen to his darling? Nina, of course, could clear herself of the vile suspicions which had been heaped up against her, but he shuddered as he thought of the pain she must endure by the explanations of her conduct which she would, perforce, have to give, in order to set herself right in the eyes of the world. How much of this pain he might have saved her, had he been free! Why wasn't he free? Why was he captive here in the house of unscrupulous and criminal men? The thought heated his blood and sent it in a boil over his brain. He tugged at the cords which confined his wrists, and rolled over on his bed.

What was that? A sound on the wall, surely! It was something like a scraping, that lasted only for a second or two. He listened, and then a movement drew his eye to the window. His breath caught in his throat as he caught sight of two or three rungs of a ladder. He watched and listened intently. Five seconds later and he was gazing in mute amazement at a face, a human face!

As he looked, his eyes fixed, his limbs incapable of movement, it burst upon him with dazing force that he had seen that lank, maniacal face before. Yes, yes—he had seen it. It was a face he could never forget—never; and those eyes, like moving specks of fire, could they ever be obliterated from memory?

But where had he seen them?

"Oh, Heaven help me!"

The words rose up to his lips involuntarily. For in that moment, he remembered. The face before him was the face of a dead man; the face of the murdered Felix Cordelvin whom he had discovered! But the eyes—they were not his; they were the eyes of the mysterious woman he had met, the eyes of the woman in the blue cloak!

(To be continued.)

RESULT OF "BRAIN GYMNASIUM," Nos. 61 to 66.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mrs. E. Hart, of 3 Avenue Road, Leamington.

A pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

Miss S. Murphy, Birr, King's Co.; H. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull; C. Annear, 53 Pursers Cross Road, Fulham; M. W. Daws, 7 Hampden Terrace, Lockwood Street, Hull; A. H. Scales, 51 Hormead Road, Paddington; Miss D. Ryan, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham; J. S. Ryan, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham; Mrs. Solly, 21 Abbots Park Road, Upton Park; J. Solly, 21 Abbots Park Road, Upton Park; H. Houston, 21 Abbots Road, East Ham.

SOLUTIONS.

61. A little pot is soon hot.

62. SLATE
STEAL
TALES
STALE

63. A V.C. for a C.I.V.

64.
C	ardif	F
O	rt	A
R	osse	L
N	ottingha	M
W	aterlo	O
A	njo	U
L	owestof	T
L	eit	H

65. GIRL-HOOD.

66. THAT
HYPO
APER
TORONTO
NAIL
TILL
OLLA

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OF
FAMOUS COPYRIGHT NOVELS.

JUST OUT.

"A Patched-Up Affair."
By Florence Warden.

Author of "The House on the Marsh," "The Master Key," etc.

Some Press opinions:

"One of the best stories the authoress of 'The House on the Marsh' has written. The various characters are sketched with a skilful hand, and the interest of the reader is sustained from the first page to the last."—*Liverpool Post.*

"A book to be read and enjoyed."—*Morning Advertiser.*

FURTHER ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. By Cutcliffe Hyne.

The success of this novel is marvellous, and although the edition consists of the gigantic number of 100,000 copies, it is more than likely that it will be exhausted within the next few weeks.

At all booksellers, newsagents, and railway bookstalls.

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Storyettes

So Would He.

"MERCY!" cried Juliet. "This glove is tight." "I, too, should be intoxicated," rapturously responded Romeo, "were I a glove on that hand."

The Wrong Term.

YOUNG MOTHER: "He is somewhat cross to-day. He is teething." Old Bachelor (in great awe of the mite of humanity): "And when do you expect him to commence—er—hairing?"

A Place of Safety.

"WHATEVER are you doing right on the top of that tree, Mike? Don't you see that it's being cut down?" Mike: "Yes, your honour; the last toime ye had a tree cut down it foll on the top of me, and, begorra, Oi'll be safe this time."

Couldn't Catch Anything.

THE small boy who applied to the physician to be vaccinated was so bright-faced that the doctor asked him who he was. "I'm Johnnie Smith," he said, "pa's a detective." "Oh," exclaimed the doctor; "run along, little boy: there's no need to vaccinate you; you'll never catch anything."

They Needed Washing.

MR. SWIPER (the well-known boatman and tale-slinger of Muckling-on-Slush): "Rough, sir. This ain't rough. Ah, I've seen the tide come up and wash every house in the High Street." Unromantic Tourist (with a lively remembrance of his present apartments): "Well, it wouldn't hurt if it came up and washed 'em again."

They Were Naturally Efficient.

VISITOR: "You have a remarkably efficient Board of Health in this town." Shrewd Native (one of many): "You are right about that, I can tell you." "Composed of scientists, I presume?" "No, sir. Scientists are too theoretical." "Physicians, perhaps?" "No. We don't allow doctors on our Board of Health—no, sir, nor undertakers, either." "Hum! What sort of men have you chosen, then?" "Life insurance agents."

Why He Gave a Present.

"So you gave your sister a beautiful birthday present, did you, Tommy?" "Yes; I always gives Susie a present on her birthday, 'cause mine comes a week after hers."

Willie Knew Fractions.

MAMMA: "How many sisters did your new playmate tell you he had?" Willie: "He's got one. He tried to catch me by saying he had two half-sisters, but he'll find out I've learnt fractions."

Wise Heads on Young Shoulders.

"I KNOW why the doctor brought that little baby," said a five-year-old the other day to her happy mother. "And why did the doctor bring the baby?" was asked. "'Cause it cries so much he didn't want to keep it himself," was the reply.

They Were Naturally Good.

"YOU have very fine teeth," remarked the dentist to the young woman in the chair. "Thank you," she responded. "I suppose they are inherited? Parents' teeth good?" inquired the dentist. "Father and mother both have full sets and not a decayed tooth in their heads, and they are past sixty-five, too," she said proudly. "That's remarkable," exclaimed the dentist. "Oh, I don't know about that," smiled the girl till her own string of pearls glittered in the light; "false teeth don't usually decay, do they?"

Catching the Ladies.

"HERE y'are now; two packages for twopence!" yelled a seedy-looking envelope-dealer in Holborn. "Here y'are, this way; two packages for a penny!" howled another envelope dealer, almost hustling his fellow-merchant off the pavement. Women out shopping noted the difference in prices, and soon bought out the two-for-a-penny man. Then both pedlars drifted round the corner, and the one who had sold no envelopes divided his stock with the other, remarking with a chuckle: "It works bee-utifully, old pal, don't it?"

She Spoke From Experience.

FOND MOTHER: "Now look here, George! I want you to break off with that girl. She is very pretty and all that; but I know her too well to want you to risk your life and happiness by marrying her. Why, she knows no more about housekeeping than I do about Greek—not a bit!" George: "Perhaps not; but she can learn." Mother: "After marriage is rather late for that, George." George: "But you said yourself that you did not know a thing about housekeeping until after you were married." Mother: "Very true, George—and your poor father died of dyspepsia twenty years ago."

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Design No. 723. **10/6**

DESIGN No. 934. 8/11.

Superior **Costume Skirt** with three shaped frills graduated at back; each frill is trimmed with braid. There are three additional rows of braid at top of frills. Made in all the shades of A. F. & Co.'s **Vicuna Cloth** or **Specialite Serge. A Great Bargain for 8/11.** Sent carriage paid 5d. extra. This Skirt can be ordered in the new "**Coronate**" **Cloth**, trimmed glace silk in place of braid. Price **15/11**. Carriage 5d.

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WRITE FOR OUR **Spring Sketch Book.** Patterns Post Free. EVERY LADY SHOULD SEE ALLEN FOSTER AND CO.'s NEW AND FASHIONABLE **'CORONATE' CLOTH.**

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SPRING TONING.

WITH the approach of Spring everyone begins to have a run down, and out of sorts feeling. This debilitated condition arises in this way. Winter with its wet and cold seeks out all the weak spots and leaves the blood charged with impurities, the bowels clogged, and the liver sluggish. Few people escape from these spring-time sufferings, and many are the little ills which make this season of the year a time of sickness and ill-health. There is only one way to remedy this condition. The whole system requires toning up, the diet regulated, and the digestive organs put into thorough working order. Bile Beans for Biliousness have proved themselves by long experience to be the very best specific for this purpose. They act in a gentle manner, give tone to the digestive organs, renovate the nervous system, enabling you to enjoy fully the welcome Spring weather.

FAINTED WITH AGONY.

A GIRL COVERED WITH PIMPLES AND SORES.

"For over three years," said Mrs. Denbury, of Washford, Somerset, "my daughter Bessie was dreadfully disfigured with an outbreak of pimples and skin blotches. First of all they appeared all over her face, and then quickly spread until her whole body was covered."

"Yes," interposed Bessie, whose bright sparkling eyes and clear complexion now denote perfect health, "I was so bad that I never liked to be seen in public. My face was completely disfigured, my mouth was drawn all on one side. The flesh was lumpy and discoloured. The pimples enlarged and burst like gatherings, causing fearful pain. More than once I have been in such agony that I have fainted away. Often I have been unable to hold myself up; so weak and sickly did I become. I had only a poor appetite, and felt disinclined to go in for exercise. It was an utterly wretched feeling that overwhelmed me. No one can really understand the acute nature of my case."

"What was done to try and cure you?" asked the reporter.

"We had medicine supplied from a chemist," broke in Mrs. Denbury, "but Bessie's ailment was so serious that he could not do her the least good. We tried various measures, which were equally unavailing; and the case had apparently grown hopeless, when our attention was drawn to the fact that Bile Beans had been found extremely beneficial in like cases. Bessie sent for some, and was so relieved in general health by them that she obtained a larger supply. It was not very long before I noticed a remarkable improvement in her appearance. Little by little the swellings and blotches became less; the gatherings healed; and to day, so far from being troubled at all with pimples or any other disfigurements, her whole skin is absolutely clear. She also feels as different again in health and spirits. Her recovery is indeed a relief; and we have only Bile Beans to thank for it.

BILE BEANS FOR BILIOUSNESS

have been proved to be an undoubted cure for headache, constipation, piles, liver trouble, bad breath, indigestion, flatulence, spasms, palpitation, liver chills, dizziness, anæmia, debility, blood impurities, skin eruptions, loss of ambition, sleeplessness, specks before the eyes, buzzing noises in the head, spring ailments, female irregularities, and a host of other ailments that owe their origin to defective bile flow, assimilation, and digestion. Obtainable of all Chemists, or post free if this paper is mentioned, from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 & 120 London Wall, London, E.C., on receipt of prices—1/1½ or 2/9. (Large box contains three times the quantity of small size.) Three large boxes 7/6, or six for 14/-.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Bile Beans are not sold loose, being put up in sealed boxes only. All others are fraudulent imitations, and you are warned not to accept any but the genuine.

A SAMPLE BOX FREE.

FREE SAMPLE COUPON.

The proprietors have so much faith in the efficacy of Bile Beans that they will forward a Sample Box Free, and a book on Liver and Digestive ailments, if you cut out this coupon, and send it with your name and address and a penny stamp (to cover return postage) to the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co.'s Central Distributing Depôt, Greek Street, Leeds. *SHORT STORIES*, April 5, 1902.

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PILASTER'S . . PREDICAMENT.

He Tried a Cure for Thirst—With Sad Results.

THERE are people who are credulous in the matter of new remedies, and hasten at the first opportunity to justify their confidences.

Mr. Pilaster is such a man.

He recently read a statement in his agricultural paper that a pebble held in the mouth would very much modify the craving for thirst, and, as he was afraid to drink large quantities owing to his delicate digestion, he was glad he had heard of the plan, and determined to give it a trial.

He did so that afternoon, selecting a nice, smooth stone, and rubbing it clean on the flap of his coat.

Pretty soon he got back in the house, and was holding the pebble in his mouth, and thinking with tears of gratitude in his eyes of the man who made the discovery, when the minister of Pilaster's church, with two clerical friends who were staying with him, and a prominent lady member of the Khidghluv Mission Society, made a call.

Mrs. Pilaster showed them into the parlour, where Pilaster, with the pebble in his mouth, joined them.

After a few suitable and impressive remarks upon the weather, to which each one contributed something and heartily concurred with what had already been advanced, the subject of the Khidghluv Mission was brought up, and the conversation became quite animated on the part of the three clergymen and the lady visitor, while Mr. and Mrs. Pilaster attentively listened.

Mr. Pilaster was sitting on a chair—sitting on the very edge, so as not to injure it—and was staring in a mild and forgiving manner at the lady, when he suddenly experienced a tickling sensation within his nostril, and, wrinkling his nose to prevent it, he broke out into a gurgling noise, and the next instant his eyes protruded. He bounded from the chair, threw his arms in the air, dropped down on the floor, and immediately went rolling and kicking under the table, upsetting that article, and strewing the floor with books, visiting cards, and wax flowers.

Then he rolled over, and reared up, and pounded with his heels, and turned black in the face, and worked his hands, and threw out his arms.

The people were terribly frightened. Mrs. Pilaster and the members of the Khidghluv Mission screamed and wrung their hands, and tried to get out of the door.

One of the strange clergymen got behind the piano, and Pilaster's own minister, who had no doubt it was a case of hydrophobia, shrieked above the din:

"Don't be frightened, ladies; Heaven will protect us," and immediately crawled under the sofa.

The other strange clergyman was the only one to retain his presence of mind. He thought it was a fit, and, catching the unfortunate Pilaster by the slack of the nether garment as he evoluted about, he held him down, and rubbed the back of his head with an album.

Then he called his friend to help him, and both of them fell to rubbing the miserable man, and pounding his breast and shaking his head; and, in the meantime, Mrs. Pilaster got a pail of water, and poured it on his head and down his back.

And in the midst of these extraordinary exertions the pebble came up, and rolled on the carpet without being perceived, but Mr. Pilaster was too weak to tell them.

Then the three picked him up and carried him to his bed, and took off his clothes, and Pilaster's minister started after all the doctors he knew the names of. Mrs. Pilaster heated water, and the lady Khidghluver spread mustard plasters; and ten minutes later the wretched patient was steaming in a blanket, and smarting under the effects of the mustard.

Then the doctors commenced to arrive, and pretty soon there were seven of them in the room, and what they didn't know about the case would have been waste of time hunting up. The first doctor said it was something with a name an inch and a half long and nine joints.

Then the next man fetched up something with a name still longer, and he was followed by a doctor who had to sit down to pronounce his.

At this Mrs. Pilaster fainted dead away, and, when she came to, the seven doctors were calling each other names of twelve syllables, and the poor lady went off again.

By this time Mr. Pilaster had so far recovered as to regain his breath, and some of his strength, and bounding out of bed, with no clothing to speak of other than three mustard plasters, he at once put an entirely new aspect on the condition of affairs.

And, when Mrs. Pilaster recovered, and when the lady member of the Khidghluv recovered, which both of them did when they discovered that there was no one to assist them, they found the room emptied, and saw Mr. Pilaster scraping mustard from his leg, and howling in the most dismal manner describable. He is better now, we understand.

But he says ninety tons of rock cannot quench his thirst for the blood of the man who suggested that pebble.

E. W.

Know Your Lover's Character

by sending a specimen of his handwriting to *RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.*, inclosing six penny stamps and stamped addressed envelope.

You will be greatly interested to know what sort of a man he really is, and he will be interested too.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

Marriage as Peacemaker.

WHEN girls marry is it not time they sank any old jealousies that may have marked their single career? This problem is suggested by "AMY," who has lately married and settled down in a neighbourhood where society is scarce. Among her neighbours is a family who had been at bitter enmity with hers in the past, owing to one of the girls having deliberately "run after" and captured a man who was supposed to be paying attention to one of "AMY'S" sisters. Now that "AMY" has married, should she let bygones be bygones, and resume the old relations with the family in question, and if so, how should she do it?

❦❦❦

I think, "AMY," it shows a very nice disposition indeed on your part to wish to be reconciled as you say. Why do you not write to the mother of the family a nice, chatty letter, recalling old times, and saying how pleased you would be to see any of the family if they would call. From the tone of the reply you could gauge whether the proposed reconciliation was mutual, and act accordingly. Did you say the other girls were married? If not, I fear, in spite of your good intentions, they would not be so very cordial to you. Your visiting might look just a little like a "crow," might it not? But you will know how to avoid giving that impression.

❦❦❦

Awkward Seventeen.

SEVENTEEN is a sweet age for girls, but at that period boys have far from a good time socially. Among my letters I find one from "ARTHUR," who writes to me in the most pathetic strain as to the suffering he undergoes at the hands of his lady relatives. The people who visit his family are either men much older than himself, or ladies. The men find him a nuisance when they wish to talk amongst themselves, and the ladies are continually hinting that they do not want him with them. So he is driven to wander about alone, snubbed at home and friendless elsewhere.

❦❦❦

I am very sorry for you, "ARTHUR," and think the way people treat youths of your age is quite abominable. Your relatives would be very well repaid if you were to make yourself scarce at all times, and, without getting into any mischief, let them think you are in some mysterious way enjoying a high old time on your own account. If they began to get suspicious, and sounded you on the matter, then would be the time for you to tell them that if they did not want you at home, there were plenty of others who did, which might bring them to treat you more considerately.

Don't worry about your position at present. In three years' time, if you progress nicely, you will find only too many people anxious to get you amongst them. Any kind of young man is very much in demand at present, when the species is found to be getting socially very rare. And after all, believe me, you do not miss much by not being wanted either by older men or ladies. The conversation of the former would not interest you much, and most certainly the latter would very much bore you. Try and strike out on your own.

❦❦❦

"People Would Talk."

How great an influence this little phrase exercises on the love affairs of scores of people! Here is "EBOR," who is in the way of being thwarted in his affection for a girl, solely because of her fear of people talking. He is staying in her mother's house as a boarder, and while there has fallen in love with her. He proposed, but she would not accept as "people would talk." Her mother takes the same view, and will not hear of an engagement while he is at their house.

❦❦❦

How should he act? I should advise "EBOR" to allow matters to stand in abeyance for a month or so. Then in the friendliest way he should announce that he would have to leave the establishment, citing family, business, or other reasons. At the same time, he should let it be understood that he wished to continue the acquaintanceship as long as possible. After a month or so he should call, and, in an independent capacity, declare his love for the girl and ask her acceptance. But I really think the idea both of the girl and her mother that people would think their engagement the subject for scandal is at best very far fetched.

❦❦❦

His Friend's Sweetheart.

So, "JACKEY," you have fallen in love, or think you have, with the girl who is engaged to your oldest friend. You think she is fonder of you than of him, and ask my advice as to how to proceed. I think you should forget all about the matter, and banish from your mind any idea of stealing a friend's sweetheart. Probably he is very fond of her, and quite possibly your supposition that she prefers you has no real foundation. All is fair in love and war, you say, and I agree with you. When a state of love and war actually exists, all certainly is fair.

❦❦❦

But before the declaration of either, all is not fair and the relations of states and individuals proceed on ordinary lines. There is no state of love existing between yourself and your friend's sweetheart, and therefore your duty to your friend, if you have a proper sense of friendship, is to keep off his preserves. Many a man has killed an imagined fascination at birth rather than let it develop to the detriment of honour. And I advise you to do the same.

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RHEUMATISM CURED

By a Simple Remedy which has Cured many cases of 30 & 40 years standing

IF YOU HAVE RHEUMATISM

Write to me and I will send you **free**, a trial package of GLORIA TONIC, that wonderful remedy which I discovered by a fortunate chance while an invalid from **Rheumatism**. This marvellous remedy has since cured thousands of men and women who have suffered almost beyond human endurance, among them persons of more than 70 years of age, and others who have suffered over 52 years. GLORIA TONIC cures this merciless disease by its action on the blood, driving from the system the Uric Acid—the cause of Rheumatism—which is the only way to cure Rheumatism, as liniments and other external appliances only treat the symptoms and not the disease. **Write for a free trial to-day.** A little book on Rheumatism, with many endorsements from people, not only from the British Isles, but from many other countries, will be sent free with every sample. Use it faithfully until the Uric Acid is banished from your system; by so doing you will not wonder why IT CURED RHEUMATISM of upwards of 52 years' standing. I have 1,000 BONA-FIDE TESTIMONIALS from people throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Delay in sending for a Trial Package is an injustice to yourself. When Doctors and University Professors endorse GLORIA TONIC, the remedy must necessarily have overwhelming merit. Write at once, even if every Hospital, Hotspring and Bath on earth has failed to cure you. Remember that GLORIA TONIC has cured THOUSANDS of persons in the past, many of whom had walked on crutches, while others were bedridden and helpless. Address all communications to

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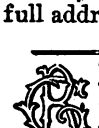

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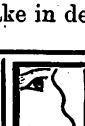

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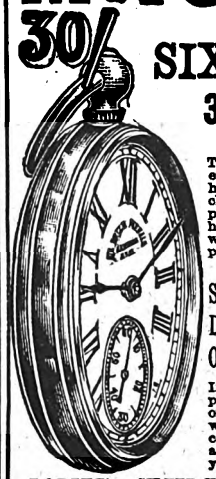

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SHORT STORIES

No. 693.] For Week Ending April 12th, 1902. [One Penny.

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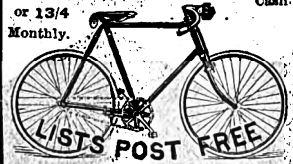

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SHORT STORIES

No. 693.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending April 12th, 1902.

A Timely Intervention.

THE DIFFERENCE A LETTER MADE.

JOHN SEPTIMUS GAYTHORNE BROWNE, General Manager to Messrs. Gradgrind, Flint and Co., the eminent City merchants, entered his well-appointed office at 9.30 A.M. precisely. He was a large, deliberate man, carefully groomed, exhaling prosperity at every pore.

He slowly removed his glossy silk hat, disclosing to view a squat, bald head, from which the hair had receded until it seemed to be endeavouring to hide itself in the creases of his crimson neck. He placed his hat upon its accustomed peg and moved majestically across the room towards his chair of state; paused a moment to raise the skirts of his superfine frock coat, then slowly subsided in the cushioned depths, adjusted his gold-rimmed *pince-nez* and gave his attention to the letters heaped upon the desk in front of him.

Tap! tap! tap! Three gentle, timid, agitated knocks re-echoed softly through the room. Mr. Browne slowly raised his head and listened.

Tap! tap! tap! Three quicker, louder knocks, like the agitated beating of a frightened child's heart. Opening his capacious mouth, Mr. Browne emitted a stern, uncompromising—

"Come in!"

The person who responded to this ungenial invitation was a sallow, weary-looking, weedy young man about twenty-five years of age, poorly, but neatly dressed. His features were not uncomely, but his tired eyes, thin cheeks and drooping mouth bore silent witness to crushed emotions, dead hopes, and the endless dull monotony of a clerk's existence.

"Well—ah—Watkins?"

"I wish to ask you, sir, whether you cannot see your way to give me a slight increase of salary. I have worked for the firm over seven years," said Watkins diffidently.

"Really—ah—Watkins——" The worthy Mr. Browne paused a moment and gazed severely at his subordinate.

"If you please, sir."

"I do not please, Watkins. Understand me, I—do—not—please! Are you not cognisant of the reputation, the high standing, the—er—great importance of the firm which does you the honour of employing you?" said Mr. Browne pompously.

"Yes, sir, I—but—but——" ventured Watkins.

"Well?"

"You know, sir, if I might venture to suggest such a thing, that the reputation of the firm won't pay my rent, nor keep my wife and me!" he blurted out. "Besides, sir——"

"Enough, Watkins, enough!" commanded the outraged Browne. "How dared you, how could you, speak so flippantly of your magnanimous employers? You—you are really—er—outrageous, Watkins!"

The suppliant looked uneasily at his senior, who rose majestically from his chair, slowly raised his *pince-nez* in one hand, placed the other behind him, and said, with chilling emphasis:

"What—what, may I ask, has this eminent firm, of which I am a most unworthy servant—this great, respected Corporation—ahem—in whose bounty you have shared for seven long years, to do with the private affairs of its innumerable employees? If, Watkins, you have been foolish enough—improvident enough!—I had almost said, criminal enough, to marry! Then, sir"—here he paused, looked steadily at Watkins, and then in the awful accents of a judge passing sentence of death, resumed:

"You must be prepared to pay the utmost penalty of your rash, your wicked act." A comprehensive, solemn sweep of the arm concluded his peroration.

"But, sir——"

"Have you no work to perform, Mr. Watkins?"

Watkins turned and left the presence without a word. Had he remonstrated with his senior, or pressed his case, he would have been dismissed. Clerks—Heaven knows—are cheap enough, and only too ready to step into another man's shoes.

The reader has doubtless discovered that John Septimus Gaythorne Browne delighted in the sonorous tones of his voice, and loved the rolling lilt of the pompous and in-

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ated sentences which he addressed to all and sundry.

It was his habit, when alone, to harangue for practice the office furniture, and on this occasion he turned to a large, glass-fronted book-case, and sternly ejaculated:

"I cannot, I will not, allow my clerks to enter the bonds of holy matrimony. It unfits them for the station to which an all-wise Providence has called them. It unsettles their minds and fosters preposterous desires. They come to me and say, the reputation of the firm will not suffice to pay our rents, to—— Umph! what blasphemy — what — what — Radicalism!" For the moment words failed the righteously indignant orator. He slowly passed his hand across his brow as if to erase a hateful memory, then heavily resumed his seat. He rang a bell. A messenger entered.

"Ah—send Mr. Watkins to me without delay."

"Yessir!" replied the man, and vanished.

"Ah, Watkins, I have given your request some slight consideration during your short absence from the—ah—apartment. I really forget what salary we pay you."

"Twenty-five shillings a week, sir."

"Is it not the usual practice to calculate per annum in this establishment?"

"I beg your pardon, sir. I should have said sixty-five pounds a year."

"Just so—ah—Watkins, just so. Pray do not allow a similar error to again occur. And now, you, sir, do you not consider you are exceedingly well remunerated for such services as you perform?"

"Hardly, sir. Believe me, it is a desperate struggle for us to live."

"Us? Us?"—ponderous mental effort to understand the application of the pronoun—"Ah, yes—of course—I had forgotten for the moment that you had—er—perpetrated matrimony. Let me see, sixty-five pounds—per—annum"—remains silent in rapt contemplation of the beneficence of the firm.

"Yes, sir—that's all," said Watkins ruefully.

"Eh?" Sudden awakening from the beatific vision. "What more do you want? Watkins!"—shaking an admonitory finger with vast solemnity—"Watkins! Matrimony, pernicious state, has warped your native generosity, has blasted the—ahem—the magnanimity of your heart. You lust after the flesh-pots of Egypt, and desire the riches that perish. A contented mind, Watkins, is a continual feast." Watkins was not so sure of this. "Be contented with your station. It is an honourable and useful one. Be happy upon the liberal salary you at present receive—even—ahem—even as I am. Have the goodness, Watkins, to close the door from the outside, if you please."

J. S. G. Browne leant back in his comfortable arm-chair, placed his finger-tips gently together, crossed his august legs and beamed placidly at the ceiling as Watkins hastily retired.

"I apprehend," he remarked, to the gilt cornice, "no further trouble with my gentleman. I flatter myself I made a great impression upon his sordid soul!" And he calmly gazed at an office chair for confirmation and applause.

Verily, it was a famous victory.

* * * * *

Mrs. Watkins put down her needle-work with a sigh and looked around her "home," a dingy, sunless, small bed-sitting room on the third-floor back of a gaunt, dull house in Pimlico.

The room contained the worthless casual household gods left behind by various former occupants. Three chairs, one badly crippled, of incongruous shapes, a small deal table somewhat the worse for wear, and an ancient sofa, which looked as though much sitting on had crushed its feeble strength. A crazy bed lolled helplessly against the wall, and sundry fly-blown texts and bilious-looking oleographs hung round the room.

The carpet straggled about the floor, a frowsy patch-work. The fire-grate, the bars of which were bent with long ill-usage from the poker, was small, and seemed to deprecate the idea that heat should be expected of it, or that anyone should be foolish enough to try to cook anything upon it. A many-shaded blue enamelled washstand, the one-time property of the landlady's "poor, dear, dead husband's sainted mother," and a cheap aggressively new chest of drawers, completed the *tout ensemble*, which occupied the greater part of the available space.

Mrs. Watkins glanced wearily from one poor article to another, and then resumed her work. How pale, how tired she looked, as she sat by the window in the fading light plying her busy needle.

Twelve months ago, a bright, happy girl of twenty, with a tumbled aureole of pale gold hair about her shapely head, laughing blue eyes, long lashes, arched brows, and cheeks as fresh as sweet wild roses blooming upon a roadside hedgerow; a winsome, laughing, healthy country girl, she had married Arnold Watkins.

Twelve weary months had drifted slowly by. Twelve months of poverty, mean shifts and petty debt; of pinching and screwing; of carking self-denial and hand-to-mouth existence, had left their marks indelibly upon her. The bitterness of narrow means had galled her tender heart, and staled the freshness of her youthful face. She had grown pale and silent 'neath a load of petty cares, and faded like a lily of the valley, in a heated room.

The kind old doctor her husband had consulted shook his head and ordered rest, fresh air, and change of scene.

"My boy," he said, "a long sea voyage is the only remedy I can prescribe. Take her out of this or you will lose her altogether."

As she sat by the window working, she mused of the happy days that seemed so far away, lost in a dim, remote, almost unreal past.

Sometimes the mirage of a cherished memory would startle her with its distinctness. One such there was. She was at the seaside and *he* was with her. The pale-green wavelets sparkled in the sunlight, danced gaily to the beach, and creamed upon the stones. The white-winged yachts flitted hither and thither. The distant deep-blue island, mist veiled, lay low along the far horizon. The faintly-breathing wind kissed her fair cheeks and softly sighed in tender unison to *his* murmuring voice, as he whispered:

"Darling, I love you! Will you be my wife?"

The joyous laugh of the little ones who played the livelong day upon the sands throbbed in the air as she had whispered in his ear a trembling:

"Yes, Arnold, for I love you!"

In the brief, bright happy days that followed their engagement, they had roamed about the seashore and across the breezy downs, planning, as young folks will, a future full of kindnesses and joy. They built of unsubstantial air a rose-clad cottage in a fragrant garden wherein to live, to love and labour all their days. With what confiding tenderness and courage had they viewed the roseate future!

"Dreaming, little one?"

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Her husband's voice dispelled the happy day-dream. She rose from her seat and put away her work.

"What news, Arnold, dearest?" she cried, as she bustled about her husband, smilingly assisting him to remove his overcoat.

"Ill news, sweetheart," he replied moodily, as he dropped into a chair. "Old Blowhard Browne won't raise my screw."

"Oh, Arnold, how unkind of him!"

"Unkind? His bread is buttered both sides, and he doesn't care a rap for anyone else. I did what I could, but you know he sacked poor old Johnson, who had been in the firm for over fifteen years because he asked for a rise. Said the firm couldn't afford to pay two pounds a week, and hoped Mr. Johnson would get it elsewhere. Beastly shame, I call it!"

"Arnold!" exclaimed his wife reprovingly.

"So it is, my dear. They grind the very soul out of a fellow, pay him the wages of a scavenger, and expect him to wear a top hat, frock coat and all the other useless paraphernalia. 'The credit of the house, you know, *must* be maintained,' and a fellow must starve on buns and glasses of milk to dress for the 'credit' of the people who employ him. It is cruelty, my darling—absolute, tyrannical cruelty!" he cried, with great vehemence.

"Dearest, don't be so angry," she remonstrated.

"Angry? I'm sick and tired of it! They break a fellow's spirit, and fling him into the streets when they have done with him. A clerk, my girl, has neither body to nourish, nor soul to save, Heaven help him! Nice outlook for us, isn't it?"

His little wife made no reply to the outburst, but crept into his arms and raised her wan, but smiling face to his.

"God bless you, darling!" he said, and kissing her fondly, he held her closely to his breast.

"Arnold," she said, "we owe poor Mrs. Burke a fortnight's rent. She is a 'poor lone widder,' you know, and she must have the money to-morrow. Do you know, dearie, I am going to pawn my engagement ring to-morrow."

"No, no, old girlie, don't do that. Put my watch away instead."

"Really—ah—Watkins——"
The worthy Mr. Browne paused a moment and gazed severely at his subordinate.

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"No, dearest, I shall pawn my ring. But, oh!" she cried half-tearfully, "it is so hard to have to part with it. No, I'm not crying a bit! Don't, you saucy boy, here comes Mrs. Burke with your dinner."

But he did.

* * * * *

Sadly, with reluctant steps, Mrs. Watkins approached the pawnbroker's shop—that bourne from which few articles, once pawned, return. Her errand, commonplace enough with the needy, was new to her, and caused her acute embarrassment.

She lingered a moment ere crossing the road which lay between her and her dreaded destination; took from her pocket the precious ring and gazed upon it through a mist of tears. Closing her hand again to guard the sacred treasure, she raised her eyes timidly and saw the curious sign, and wondered at it in a vague, dull way. Her eyes then wandered to the legend writ in staring gilt above the door and windows—

"Moses—Pawnbroker and Jeweller. Money lent on Plate."

The statement, plain and prosaic, excited disquieting ideas within her breast. Her heart throbbed painfully; a vague, unreasoning sense of shame oppressed her agitated mind. She, so brave last night before her loved, admiring husband, now trembled like a startled fawn.

Glancing furtively now left, now right, she hastily crossed the road, approached the shop and hovered uneasily about it; peeping first into one window and then into the other; making several attempts to venture across the threshold but each time pausing irresolutely just without the door.

At last she found herself within the hateful place. A voice from somewhere in the dim interior fell harshly upon her startled ears:

"Well, ma'am, what can I do for you?"

She tried to answer but could not. She unclasped her trembling hands and placed her treasure upon the grimy counter. The owner of the voice picked it up and examined it minutely. How guilty she felt. She wondered whether he would ask her to whom the ring belonged, and how she had obtained possession of it. The blood rushed to her face. She felt sure the man would notice her confusion. Shame, uncertainty, and dread held riotous possession of her breast. To her surprise and great relief he simply asked:

"'Ow much?".

"I beg your pardon?"

"'Ow much?"

"I really do not know, I'm sure; it is a very good ring."

"Ring's all right. Wot d'y' want on it?"

"What will you lend?"

"Eighteen shill'n's. That do?"

"Oh, thank you! Yes!"

The necessary formalities were quickly complied with, the money promptly paid, and Mrs. Watkins breathed the outside air once more.

As she hastened homeward, she was conscious of a strong desire to laugh aloud or cry heartily, she knew not which. Her thoughts were curiously jumbled. She had eighteen shillings in her pocket—she could pay Mrs. Burke—could look her straight in the face once more. But the ring?—ah! that dear, dear, precious ring which he had given her—the glistening token of their mutual love. It was gone! That harsh-voiced man with the dirty fingers had it. She would never see it again, never; she could not bear to lose it! she would go back again to the horrid shop! No, she could not—must not—Mrs. Burke must and should be paid.

She hurried along, her thoughts keeping time with her echoing footsteps. She reached the house, entered, ran upstairs, threw herself upon the bed and sobbed and sobbed until she fell asleep.

* * * * *

Cautious, shuffling steps came along the passage and stopped at the door. A gentle knock. A pause. A louder knock. Another pause. Knock the third, and loudest. The handle softly turned, the door swung slowly open and admitted a tall, bony, middle-aged female dressed in rusty black. Her thin, hard mouth, hooked nose, dull eyes, angular features, leaden complexion, and furrowed forehead told of brusque, unkindly usage from the world and the flesh. She stooped a little as though she carried a burden, and faltered as she moved across the room towards the bed.

"Poor dear! She's sleepin' like a babby. An' ain't she like my poor, lost 'Loo'!" she muttered, with a sad, world-weary expression upon her uncomely face.

"Shall I 'tote' you along, Nell?" said her husband.

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"She'd a bin just about her age if she'd only lived, poor darlin'! Why, she's bin a-cryin'! She *is* like Loo, an' fadin' just the same."

As Mrs. Burke bent towards the sleeper something like a smile of soft compassion suffused her grim features as she watched the peaceful slumber of her "third-floor back."

The sleeper stirred, sighed, awoke. She seemed somewhat astonished to see Mrs. Burke, angel-like, guarding her bed.

"I made bold, Mrs. Whatsname, to come in as I couldn't make you 'ear, and I found you a-sleepin' like a noo born babe. I 'adn't the 'eart to wake you, so I waited till you woke yourself. Can you now, Mrs. Whatsit, mum, let me have something on account. That landlord o' mine is pesterin' for 'is rent, an' he's bin 'ere to-day a-threatenin' to put the baileys in if I don't pay up sharp."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Burke," cried Mrs. Watkins eagerly, "Here are eighteen shillings."

"No, Mrs. Whatsname, I won't take all that. 'Alf a soverin' will do me. You 'aven't no more than you knows what to do with. Ah! while I thinks of it, 'ere's a letter what come while you was out." said Mrs. Burke as she hurried from the room, leaving eight shillings and the letter upon the table.

"Mrs. Burke! Mrs. Burke! you *must* take it all!"

But Mrs. Burke was hastening downstairs as fast as her feeble legs would carry her, muttering as she went: "Ain't she like my poor, lost Loo!" and wiping her weak eyes with the corner of her large white apron.

"God bless poor Mrs. Burke!" said Mrs. Watkins, as she gently closed the door. Then, taking up some needlework, she sat down and commenced to work.

It was not long before she heard a well-beloved footstep on the stairs. She arose, opened the door and ran into her husband's longing arms.

"Arnold, here is a letter for you, dear," she said, as soon as he would let her speak.

"A letter, little one? I expect it's an unpaid bill!" he replied, as he took it from the table.

"Postmark Melbourne! Addressed in a strange handwriting to my old home! Been re-addressed twice! Who on earth is it from?"

Mrs. Burke's faltering feet were heard ascending the stairs, so he placed the letter in his pocket until she had set the table and quitted the room.

As soon as her back was turned he took the letter from its hiding-place, tore it open, extracted the contents and read aloud:—

"West's Hotel, Melbourne,
"June 6th, 1901.

"My dear Nephew,—I have addressed this letter to the old home in the hope that it will find you. I am not used to writing so will say what I have to say in as few words as possible.

"I daresay you have heard your dear mother speak of her brother Ben, who went to Australia years ago. I am he. I have made a pile—have neither chick nor child of my own, and want you to come out to me.

"I inclose £100.

"If you decide to come it will pay your passage. If you decide to stay at home, bank it.

"Let me know by what boat you sail—if you sail, and believe me to be. Your affectionate uncle,
"Benjamin Smith.

"*P.S.*—If you are married tote the family along."

"Shall I 'tote' you along, Nell?" said her husband.

"Oh, yes, please, dearie!" she replied enthusiastically.

* * * * *

Some three weeks after the above recorded events, the good ship *Star of the East* steamed rapidly down channel *en route* for the Antipodes.

The passengers had gathered on the decks to watch the receding shores of dear old England lying cloudlike far astern, and growing fainter in the dim, calm twilight.

A little apart from the others stood Arnold Watkins and his wife, bidding a silent adieu to their native land.

"Dearest," said Arnold, "let us go below. Good-night, old England; soon we shall say 'good-morning' to young Australia, where health and wealth await us."

And as they turned away the last misty trace of England faded into the night.

Arthur H. Budden.

Not According to Order.

A youth, who directed his tailor to make his trousers in the "latest style, to fit like the skin," returned his trousers after one trial, remarking, "They were not according to order." He "could sit down in his skin, but could not in his trousers."

Advantage of Having a Sister.

"Bessie," said Adolphus to his sister, "I have taken a fancy to a young lady with whom I am but slightly acquainted, and would like to know what her faults are. How can I find out?" "Praise her to her young lady acquaintances!" said Bessie.

Obtaining Money Falsely.

She: "You told me before we were married that you loved me for myself alone, and now I find that it was my fortune that won you." He (coldly): "Well?" She: "Well, I'll have you arrested for obtaining money under false pretences."

What the Difference Was.

The following conversation, reported by a friend, was recently overheard between two brothers, aged four and six years: "Winny, tell me what is the difference between a bicycle and a tricycle?" Elder (with patronising air): "Why, Ray, don't you know that? If a man takes the thing home to see how he likes it, it is a tricycle; but if he buys it outright it is a bicycle."

They Hadn't Rung.

Two ladies stood on the doorstep of a friend's house waiting for admission, and they became very impatient at the delay. "It's very odd to be kept waiting at Mrs. Darley's," said one. "The door is usually opened so promptly." "So it is. I'm getting very tired." "I wonder if there is absolutely no one in the house?" "Of course there are people in. We'll ring again." "You rang before, didn't you?" "Why no. I thought you rang?" "Well, I was sure you rang. How ridiculous!" "Yes, isn't it?" Then one of them rang and the door was opened.

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AT THE . . . . . LAST HOUR.

The Mystery of the One-Eyed Prince.

It was three years ago to-day that I first made the acquaintance of the two young princes, Brahbee. How the younger died you have learnt from the papers. Why he died I will endeavour to explain more precisely than you will ever gather from the minutest report that will be published.

It was in the country house of Sir Francis Gubyon that I was first introduced to these two strange young princes.

As usual, Sir Francis had his house full. He loved to entertain in that sumptuous and wholesale way that gave him the reputation of being the best host in all the country.

The hunting season was in full swing, and I had been invited down for the last two or three weeks of my winter vacation.

Of all that gay assemblage I need hardly add the two princes were the centre of attraction.

Although I was before long on fairly intimate terms with these young men, yet, in common with my fellow guests, I found it quite impossible to distinguish between them. They were both short, and both wore their hair thick and curly. In fact they were so absolutely alike that no one would believe that they were not twins. This, however, was not the case, and the elder was, I afterwards learnt, more than three years older than his brother. They were both very dark skinned, but in every other respect quite English, for they had been born and educated in England.

As if they delighted in perplexing their acquaintances with regard to their identity they persisted in dressing exactly alike. Even the very watch chains they wore were of the same pattern.

One morning at breakfast I happened to find myself seated next to one of these princes. I found him an exceedingly gentlemanly and well-read young man. I think he must have taken a great fancy to me, for before the meal was over he had told me a great deal about his personal affairs.

The two princes, I learnt, were about to visit their native country for the first time. Prince Frederick Brahbee, I gathered, was the name of my companion, who was the elder of the two brothers, and had just come into a large estate and fortune in the land of his fathers.

While we were thus chatting, I happened to glance across the table. Seated exactly opposite was the younger prince looking as black as thunder, and doing his utmost to catch the attention of his brother.

My companion, however, seemed purposely to avoid his eye, and kept up the conversation, utterly regardless of all the frantic endeavours on the part of his brother, while I, of course, saw it was not my place to interfere.

We had not been seated very long, however, when our host put his head in at the door to remind his slothful guests (among whom I fear I was to be numbered) that it was already past ten and that we had a five miles ride that morning to the meet.

It so chanced that I did not come across either of the two princes again that day. In fact, it was not until after dinner on the following night that I had another word with the Prince Frederick, who interested me so greatly.

I chanced to find my way out on to the terrace which ran along the front of the dining room windows, and here I discovered the Prince groping about on the ground.

As I approached he looked up, "Oh," he said, "I have dropped my eye, could you help me find it?"

"Your eye!" I exclaimed in wonder.

However, he soon set me at rest by explaining that it was a glass one.

We searched a long time, and presently I came across it, half hidden beneath a big lump of gravel.

As he replaced the missing member, I inwardly made a note of the peculiarity, which I felt would enable me in future to tell the two brothers apart without the smallest difficulty. The only thing that surprised me was that no one had ever discovered the defect before.

Presently, however, this was explained, for as we were sitting together in the billiard-room that evening Prince Frederick informed me that the eye had been made especially for him, and at a great cost, by an oculist who deservedly had the reputation of being at the head of his profession. This was sufficient reason why it should be so unnoticeable until the imitation was pointed out.

The next day I found myself called back to town unexpectedly, but before I left I received and accepted an invitation to pay this young prince a visit in his new home as soon as I could see my way to journeying to such distant parts.

I also received at his hands a letter of recommendation to the great Parisian specialist who had made that wonderful imitation eye, in case, as he put it, "I should ever want one for myself."

This story is not an autobiography, and I have therefore purposely made as few remarks about myself as possible. However, I must explain one or two personal matters before proceeding with my tale.

It must be known then, that I was the nephew of Sir Francis Gubyon. Further, that the knight had a daughter. Now, although no words had ever been spoken on the matter on either side, it seemed, somehow, the accepted arrangement that some day we should be more than cousins to one another. I came, therefore, apparently without justification, to look upon my Cousin Grace as my special property.

Imagine my surprise and disgust, therefore, when one morning, some two years after the events I have nar-

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rated, I received a short note from my uncle, which ran as follows:

My Dear Boy,—I am sure you will hear with great pleasure of the engagement and approaching marriage of Gracie. The whole affair has been arranged very suddenly. No doubt you noticed when staying here some two years ago that Gracie showed a great liking for Prince Frederick Brahbee, who was spending some time with me before going out to his newly accquired estates. Also you may have perceived that the feeling was not reciprocated. However, the young man seems to have altered his mind since then, as he turned up in England a few days ago, and has asked for the hand of my daughter in marriage, and of course Gracie was delighted. The event is to come off at once, as he has to return again to India shortly. You will, of course, give us the pleasure of your presence at the ceremony the day after to-morrow.

Yours, etc.

I read the letter several times, and each time I felt the blow more keenly. It was terrible news to me. After all, Gracie never cared for me—or only as a cousin. I hated myself for waiting so long. I abused myself for not having noticed that there was something between my fickle cousin and the prince. My head sank on my hands, and I believe I cried.

Of course, I realised that it was no earthly use grieving. It was too late to declare my affections now.

Finally I determined to face the whole thing boldly, and to accept the invitation to be present at the wedding.

Well, it so happened that I was detained in town and only found myself in the train two hours before the ceremony was to take place.

When I arrived at the station I found the dog-cart waiting. There was then only ten minutes to spare, and a good two miles between me and the church.

The horse did his best, but luck was against me. Half way there we were blocked for a good five minutes by a waggon, and when at last I alighted at the porch the service had already begun.

I entered the church and was shown into a seat which had been kept for me right in the front.

Who can describe my emotions as I sat there to see the girl I loved married to another.

When at last I dragged my eyes from the lovely face of the bride I felt a fainting sensation come over me. However, with a supreme effort, I righted myself, and took a glance of no little curiosity at the prince who had thus forestalled me in my love.

I started as I looked upon his face. To the eye of the casual observer Prince Frederick had not altered. But his face! To the reader of characters what a history had been engraved there in the course of two short years. That look of gentleness and trustfulness had disappeared. The troubles of wealth had told upon this young man's whole being. His face showed signs of fearful dissipation, and his eyes seemed to look upon everything with a distrustful glare. I sighed for the sweet innocent girl who was to share her life with him.

As the pair stood before the minister to be made one, Prince Frederick, as if conscious of the gaze I had fixed upon him, turned round and his eyes met mine. For a moment we faced one another. Suddenly I felt myself turn cold all over and I clutched at the pew for support. Then with a wild cry I sprang from my place and leapt towards the pair.

The eyes that were turned upon me were both as Nature made them.

"Where is your brother?" I cried, as I seized the startled bridegroom by the arm. Then turning to the excited congregation I, horror-stricken, said:

"This man is not Prince Frederick, but his younger brother."

* * * * *

I had made the discovery only just in time to save the two being wedded.

I will not dwell on those dreadful moments when there, before my startled friends, I proved my statement. I will not describe the scene of confusion which followed as my cousin was carried to the carriage fainting, nor as the prince left the church, not a husband, but a prisoner.

It was a long time before the affair was cleared up in the way which led to the sad execution of the young Prince Victor Brahbee which has, as you know, just taken place.

The papers the impostor had with him showed the fact that he was known in India as Prince Frederick Brahbee, and we learnt by wire that no brother had ever arrived with him at the huge estates which were supposed to be his.

However, the evidence of the Parisian specialist, whose address I had received from the missing Prince's hands, was sufficient to amply prove my assertions.

Finally, the mystery was cleared up, as no doubt you have read, by the discovery of human remains beneath the floor of a room in a hotel. This was at Bombay, where it was proved the two princes, Frederick Brahbee and Victor Brahbee had stayed. Among the dust and bones was found a glass eye of exquisite make which the specialist had no difficulty in identifying.

The hotel keeper, on being closely questioned, stated that he was aware of the fact that only one of the gentlemen had ever left the hotel.

The other, he had been told, had been drowned accidentally one day during his stay, but he had received a large sum to say nothing about the affair. It was none of his business, and he had held his tongue.

And this is the true history of the One-Eyed Prince.

F. L. P.

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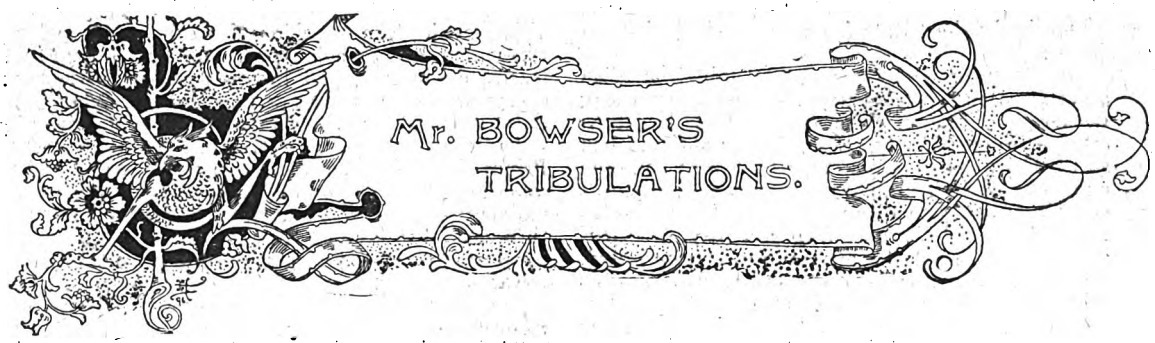

He Is Called upon to Settle a Dispute.

THE Bowsers had just finished dinner the other evening when the bell rang, and Mr. Bowser was asked to step outside for a minute. He held some sort of discussion with two or three men on the doorstep, and at the end of ten minutes re-entered the house to say to Mrs. Bowser:

"I find that I shall have to go out for an hour or so this evening."

"Some club matter?" she queried.

"No. Those gentlemen who just called were a committee, or rather, two committees, appointed to secure my services as arbitrator between two unions. I am to meet them at head-quarters. I was selected over scores of others mentioned, and I feel a bit proud of the honour done me."

"But what do you want to mix up in a quarrel for?" she asked.

"In the first place there is no quarrel, but only a disagreement; in the next, I shall hear the statements of both sides and smooth over the little trouble."

"What is it about?"

"Why, as I understand it, the Moving Van Union and the Moving Van Employers are at loggerheads as to what constitutes a load for a man to carry up three flights of stairs. The Union holds to it that when a man is loaded down with a sideboard or a bureau that's enough, while the Employers hold that a mattress or an iron bedstead ought to be added. I shall, of course, hear more particulars at headquarters. It has been agreed to leave the decision to me, and I feel somewhat flattered over it."

"I wouldn't if I were you," quietly observed Mrs. Bowser.

"Hey? What do you mean?"

"I mean that you had better let them fight it out among themselves. You'll make more enemies than friends if you join in."

"There you go—always and forever opposing anything I do. I might have known you'd have something to say against it. Woman, what in thunder ails you?"

"I simply ask you to keep out of trouble. What is it to you whether a moving van man carries six bedsteads or only a hat-box at a load?"

"Do you understand that this matter may become a great national issue within a month?" he asked preening himself.

"No, I don't."

"Do you understand that it may eventually spread to the remotest parts of the earth, and that thrones may totter and republics quake under the strain?"

"Nonsense. I understand that if you mix yourself up with it you'll come home hatless and with your coat torn up the back."

"That is enough, woman—that is enough," said Mr. Bowser as he waved her aside. "You have got about as much sense as a bump on a log, and it is of no use to argue with you. Don't sit up for me. I shall come home when I am ready. What the blazes——"

He referred to the cat, which was sitting up and grinning at him with her left eye half closed. He jumped at her with fell intention, but she sought safety under the piano and chuckled as he put on his overcoat and hat and passed out of the house.

After a walk of ten minutes he reached the place designated. It was a carriage warehouse. It was next door to a public-house. There were two men in the carriage warehouse and thirty-four in the public-house, and, as the thirty-four refused to join the two, the two finally decided to join the thirty-four.

Mr. Bowser didn't look upon this as exactly parliamentary, but he was not there to split straws. He was expected. He was greeted as "old man," "boss," "Bowser," and so forth, and the president of the Moving Van Union took him aside and said:

"I say, you'd better treat the boys to drinks all round before we begin business. They have done you a great honour, and they'll want to see that you appreciate it."

Mr. Bowser hesitated, but only for a moment. It was a crisis, and he never shirked a crisis. The thirty-seven glasses had scarcely been emptied when the president of the Moving Van Employers beckoned him into a corner and whispered:

"Repeat the dose, old man. That was a treat for the Union. You must now treat the Employers."

Mr. Bowser treated. It was another crisis, and he met it. Then the meeting was called to order, and the president of the M. V. E. proceeded to state his side of the case.

When he hired a man on one of his carts, he expected that man to do his duty. If that man was broad enough in the back and strong enough in the legs to carry a piano upstairs, he was expected to do it. If he was a weakling and could only bear the weight of a cabinet and a bookcase, no fault would be found with him so long as he did his best. What the Employers found fault with was that two men would conspire to do one man's work.

He cited case after case where he had seen men climb three or four flights of stairs with no other loads than a stove on their backs and a dining-room table in either hand, and where he had seen two men make a great ado about getting a safe weighing half a ton on to a fourth floor.

All the Employers asked for was a square deal. They didn't expect any one man to carry a whole vanload of goods upstairs at one trip, but neither was it fair or right that a man should waste valuable minutes mopping the sweat from his brow or wondering how a six-foot bedstead could be pushed up a three-foot stairway.

The speaker did not sit down when he had finished. On the contrary, he edged near to Mr. Bowser and suggested that another crisis was at hand. That crisis called for more beer, and Mr. Bowser met it.

Then the president of the M. V. U. rose and stated his side of the case. He didn't call it a case where capital was sucking the lifeblood of labour. It was that capital was breaking labour's back by overloading it with sideboards and cabinets. He pointed to his bald head and declared that his hair had been worn off by rubbing against family linen chests.

He pointed to his bowlegs and declared them to be the direct result of carrying heavy loads of bedsteads and tables. Under

the slave-driving system pursued by the M. V. E., the members of the M. V.. U. all over the world were becoming squat, baldheaded and bowlegged, and a year hence would see them hump-backed as well. It was a feeling speech—that is, he felt for Mr. Bowser after concluding it, and said that a terrible crisis could only be avoided by another call for beer. It was called for.

Then the arbitrator rose to arbitrate. Mr. Bowser will never remember where he began his remarks; anyhow, they were interrupted by calls for more beer. He will also be at a loss to recall just what started the disturbance when further calls for beer were unheeded. Someone may have called someone else a prevaricator, or there may have been a difference of opinion on some of the political questions of the day. A disturbance came, however, and two minutes after the first upset everybody was trying to punch everybody else's head.

There was no opportunity for Mr. Bowser to bear himself nobly in this crisis. A blow on the nose put him out of it almost at the start, and he had been walked on for ten minutes before he finally reached the door and got out. Mrs. Bowser and the cat were waiting.

The silence of the frosty evening was suddenly broken by what seemed to be the gallop of a horse along the footpath. It came nearer and nearer, and there was a hitch and a limp in the gallop as it turned in at the gate. Then there was a rush up the front step, a bang at the door, and Mr. Bowser stood in the hall. He was a human wreck. He had got it badly. He had met the enemy, and been worsted.

"Well?" asked Mrs. Bowser as he leant up against the wall and panted.

His eyes rolled, but he could not utter a word.

"I see," she continued. "Arbitrator Bowser has arbitrated and the result is what might be expected—nose smashed, hat gone, clothes ruined, and your eyes turning black. If you can manage to crawl upstairs, I'll get some hot water and the medicine chest and see if I can patch you up."

"Wo—woman——" he began, but she raised her hand and stopped him, and he crawled.

M. Quad.

[Next week: The effect a summer drink like his mother used to make, had on him.]

A QUEER BLUNDER.

How a Bride was Won by a Mistake.

The morning sun brightened the gilt letters on the sign above the entrance to the staunch old warehouse, but its radiance was lost on the young man with keen, grey eyes who stood at the office door and hesitated before he turned the knob. In that brief moment he tried to recall the directions that Emily Quarles had given him,

"Father is peculiar," she had said. "You must know him before you can appreciate him." And Spencer Grant wondered how long it would be before this appreciative stage could be reached. He hadn't met this peculiar father, and here he was standing on the doormat of his office mustering up courage to go in and ask him for his daughter.

What else had Emily said? "Do not contradict father. Do just what he tells you to do. Let him have his own way. If he blusters and fumes, wait quietly. He will soon cool down. Father's gruff manner is largely assumed. If you have tact, you will discover the way to handle him. Tell him truthfully, if you have a chance, how we met at Aunt Stanhope's, and that as soon as we were quite assured that we were all in all to each other, which, you must add, came to both of us as a complete surprise, I sent you directly to him. I will prepare him as far as I think judicious for your coming. Keep a stout heart and guard your temper."

Spencer turned the knob and went in. There were several clerks writing in the outer office, but they did not look up as he passed along the narrow space before the high railing to the door marked "private." He knocked at this door, and a gruff voice bade him come in. Spencer summoned up all his resolution and entered

A sharp-featured old man, with heavy eyebrows, was seated at a desk, with his bushy grey head bent above a handful of papers.

"Sit down," he said, without looking up.

Spencer obeyed, and after a little the old man raised his head, glanced at the clock, and then gave the young man a long searching glance. As he did so he drew a letter towards him and glanced at a page of it. Again he stared at Spencer.

"Well," he said abruptly, "you are exactly to time. You were to be here precisely at ten. This argues well for your early training. You have made a good impression on me to start with."

Spencer murmured his pleasure at this favourable comment, but the old man interrupted him.

"Your father says here that you resemble him. He writes that the resemblance is so strong that I couldn't help but know who you were if I chanced to meet you anywhere. I don't agree with him, though there is a family resemblance. You are much better looking than he ever dreamt of being."

"Did my father say that?" inquired Spencer hastily. He knew the thing was quite impossible. Emily's father was labouring under some queer delusion. But he didn't mean to contradict him.

"Yes, he did," chuckled the old man, with a grim smile. "Fathers with but one child are apt to be asses." Then his tone changed. "What can you do? Can you write shorthand? Do you understand typewriting? Can you compose a good letter? Can you spell?"

"I think," said Spencer, quietly, "that I can best answer that by saying that I have a pretty thorough business training that was picked up in four years of practical work. I've been hard at it, in fact, ever since I left school."

"Your father doesn't make any such claim," said the old man, referring again to the letter. "All he says is 'Try him.' I will. I've made a good place for you. I am going to indulge in the luxury of a private secretary. Ha, ha, ha! Here take these letters. See what answers they need. Answer 'em. That's your little side room there. Leave the door open—I may want to call you."

Spencer smilingly took the letters and without a trace of hesitation went into the little room assigned him. He found the conveniences he needed, and with his amused smile deepening he went at his task.

Presently he heard the outer door of the office open and shut, and a moment later the following dialogue came to him through the half-closed door:

"So you have come," growled the old man.

"Yes, sir," said a mild voice with a little quaver in it.

"Well," said the old man, with a dangerous rising inflection, "I want to tell you that it can never be!"

"Do you mean that I won't do?" inquired the mild voice.

"That's just what I mean," snarled the old man. "Your comprehension does you credit."

"But how can you tell till you've tried me?" protested the mild voice.

"Tried you?" roared the old man. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, sir," said the mild voice, hurriedly, "that I hardly think it fair to condemn me unheard and untried. I was led to think you would show me more consideration."

"Oh, you were, were you?" snapped the old man. "Well, sir, you have been falsely led. I know my daughter much better than you do, sir!"

"Your daughter, sir?"

"Yes, my daughter! And don't you dare to mention her name!"

"I—I had no intention of doing so, sir."

"Eh? Coming to your senses, are you? That's right. She's only a foolish, headstrong girl. In a month she'll forget your existence."

"But I don't see what your daughter has to do with it. She is nothing to me, sir."

"Spoken like a sensible youth. I thought I'd convince you. There, there, let the whole thing drop."

"And you positively refuse to give me a trial?"

"Confound you, there you go again! Do you take me for an idiot!"

"I—I wouldn't go as far as that, sir. You don't seem to understand that I was led to believe you would give me an opportunity to show my worth. I am greatly disappointed, sir."

"Heavens! man, are we going over all that again?"

"Try me for a month, sir."

"Not for a minute!"

"For a week."

"Leave the room, sir! Go, sir! Go to the lunatic asylum and marry somebody in your own mental class."

"I am going, sir. My father will be greatly surprised at your unreasonable treatment."

"Your father! Who cares for your father? Why doesn't he keep his weak-minded children at home?"

"Good day, sir."

The door closed with a sharp bang, and there was a brief silence.

"I wonder what the dickens he meant by saying he'd tell his father?" Spencer heard the old man mutter. "Who's his father? Well, whoever he is, his son shall never marry my daughter. What in the world could she have seen in such an unbalanced fellow?"

His heavy step sounded on the floor, and when Spencer looked up the old man was gazing down at him from the doorway. His face was very red and his white hair bristled with indignation.

"Well, Mr. Secretary," he said, "how are we coming on?"

"Very well, sir," replied Spencer, "I'll lay these replies upon your desk in a few moments."

"Good," said the old man.

"By the way," said Spencer, "what do you want to say to Van Annam and Co.? They make an offer for your stock of cochineal, you know."

"Accept it and tell them we'll ship the stuff to-morrow."

"I wouldn't do that," said the secretary.

"Eh?" cried the astonished old man.

"You don't seem to know that there is a corner forming in dye stuffs," said Spencer, with a slight smile. "Wait a minute, and I will telephone for the latest quotations."

He rose as he spoke and stepped into the outer office and entered the telephone box.

"It is just as I supposed," he said as he rejoined the old man. "Cochineal jumped 34 per cent. at the opening of the market this morning."

The old man turned and went back to his desk. A moment later he looked in again.

"That means £500 to the good," he said. "I fancy you'll earn your salary all right." Then he slowly added, "And I fancy I'm getting old."

The sound of an opening door drew his attention. A radiant vision appeared in the doorway. It was Emily.

"Well, papa?" she cried, as she stepped forward.

The old man's lips tightened. "I sent him packing," he said rapidly. "A most reprehensible young follow. You didn't know him, my dear."

Before she could indignantly reply an astonishing apparition appeared in the doorway of the inner room. It was Spencer—it was Spencer, bare-headed, with a pen in one hand and a bundle of letters in the others. As he caught her eye he put his finger to his lips, and shook his head at her over the old man's shoulder, and drew back.

"Oh, father," was all Emily could say.

"Don't feel bad, my child," said the old man, with a little tenderness in his tone. "You'll soon forget him." He lowered his voice. "I've got a nice young fellow inside there"—he jerked his thumb towards the inner door—"who is just the man for you. Smart, splendid family, good looking, bright as a new pin. Saved me £500 this very morning! Hadn't been at work twenty minutes. Wait a little and I'll introduce him."

"Let me look at him!" cried Emily, as she darted to the door.

"Good morning," she said to Spencer.

"Good morning," answered that smiling youth, with an eloquent grimace.

Emily turned to her astonished parent.

"He'll do," she said. "Come out here, sir," and they came forward hand in hand.

"Bless my soul!" cried the paralysed father.

"You are quite right, papa," said Emily. "He is just the man for me. In fact, I've thought so for some time, and yet I don't believe you really know who he is. You are getting reckless, daddy. Tell him who you are, Spencer."

"I am Spencer Grant, of Spencer Grant and Co., importers of dyestuffs and druggists' supplies, and entirely at Mr. Richard Quarles' service."

"Spencer Grant and Co.!" gasped the old man, as a look of horror came over his face. "Then who was the other fellow?"

"I'm afraid," said Spencer gently, "that it was the highly recommended son of your old friend."

"Awful!" groaned the old man. "I was right when I said fathers with one child are asses. How can I explain?"

"Suppose you leave the explanation to your new secretary?" said Emily.

"Let me suggest," said Spencer, with a happy smile, "that you leave it to the junior member of the new firm of Quarles and Grant."

And then the grim old man chuckled. N. S. T.

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SHORT STORIES
NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH TOWNS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.
Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each set describing the name of a town of over 5,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

For the convenience of those readers who were unable to obtain copies of the numbers of "SHORT STORIES" containing the first two coupons, it has been arranged to publish them in "THE BIG BUDGET," dated April 12th; on sale Thursday next.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until another list has appeared.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

THIRD LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:
To exclude monarch..... Barking.

21. City of the King's Consort ..... 21 .....
22. A vessel for bathing in ..... 22 .....
23. Sea weed ..... 23 .....
24. Interrupt a way ..... 24 .....
25. Border of an organ in the animal system ..... 25 .....
26. An ornament; stone ..... 26 .....
27. Genuine ..... 27 .....
28. The bleak finished ..... 28 .....
29. Grey; to cover with earth ..... 29 .....
30. A plant with emollient qualities 30 .....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

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Being Leaves from the Life-Book of Mrs. Dundas Muir.

CHAPTER I.
The Week-End and the Widow.

"Muir? Dundas Muir? Don't know her."

"No! Why, I thought everybody who is anybody knew the very loveliest widow man ever left behind him."

"Well, you see I most certainly am not everybody; for, as a matter of fact, the lady is as altogether unknown to me as—as is the Queen of Sheba."

"You surprise me, Fielding," said the master of "Upcotes," Jack Wyndham—known in his service days as "Daredevil Jack"—with a semi-comic shrug of one shoulder. "You—a man who goes everywhere, sees everything, and who is credited with knowing everybody worth knowing—not, at some time during your wanderings, to have crossed the trail of the divine widow! It is inconceivable!"

"But yet true," returned Vivian Fielding, puffing vigorously the while at his cigar. "Now, tell me, old chap, what is she like, this paragon of perfection?—and—whence comes she?"

"Like!" replied the host. "Why, like nothing else under the sun! Certainly like no other woman."

"A large order that, my enthusiastic friend! As how? Consider!—explain!"

"She's an enigma. She is full of ideas; her lips literally drop pearls of wit and wisdom; and yet she can hardly be said to be—well—you know—educated—in the academic sense, that is, and as you and I understand it!"

"Odd that. Yes?"

"Then, my boy, she's beautiful! You can't conceive how beautiful. There must, I am convinced, be a strain of French blood in her; she is so *chic*; so brimming over with Gallic innocence and charm."

"Ah! And her late husband—who was he?—what was he?"

"That's the riddle! Nobody knows. I rather think he must have been some beastly rich Yankee Johnny, for I *do* know that she has lived in New York and Boston; while more than once she has been heard to drop suspicious allusions to a certain General Lew Cole, whoever he may have been."

"Odd," remarked Fielding again. "And you've invited this mysterious being to join our week-end party? Rather risky, isn't it, supposing that there *should* be anything about her not quite—you understand?"

"I invited her! No, that's the funny part of it, and what I just did *not* do! She invited herself, or rather persuaded Mrs. Cottrell—you know Mrs. Cottrell?—her husband is M.P. for this division of the county—persuaded me to include her in her family contribution to my guest list."

"Well, all I can say is," said Vivian Fielding rising, and stretching himself, "that she is undoubtedly a clever woman; but that she is as straight as she is clever is, I am inclined to fancy, decidedly open to question."

The two men were old Army comrades and friends. Both were comparatively young, neither being much over thirty-two or three.

Wyndham was a rich man, and "Upcotes," his river place beyond Cookham, would have been hard to beat as a near-to-London country seat.

This after-dinner talk on the Friday evening before Mrs. Dundas Muir's expected week-end advent on the day following, made Fielding especially arm himself as against an enemy who would, he more than shrewdly suspected, prove to be worthy of his steel.

A travelled man, there was hardly a habitable hole and corner of the earth that, at some time or other, he had not visited. Woman, as such, he had more particularly studied; but it was with the object of picking out her faults and failings, rather than to do honour to her possible gifts and virtues.

Rumour had it that Vivian Fielding had, in his earlier days, suffered at the hands of an unscrupulous Circe, and for once rumour was right.

While in Washington, during a long leave, some six years before, he had attended White House and other Ministerial receptions. At one of the latter, at the residence of the then War Secretary, he had been introduced to a lady whose fascinating personality was destined to influence him so powerfully as to make of him her most abject slave and worshipper.

Vashti Endicott had really no right or title to an entrance into the smart political set of the capital. Her origin, position, and social standing were absolutely unknown; but she appeared to have good means; and this, and her almost perfect loveliness—of a rich Spanish type—sufficed to blind people—the men especially—to the fact that she was altogether silent as to her life details.

Fielding met Vashti Endicott time and again, the last time being at the same house where he had been first introduced to her.

It was pure accident that made it the last time; pure accident that wrought a change in the man's nature that, in the years that followed, generated in his soul a veritable hatred of all women.

The occasion was a Ministerial reception, and Vashti was late.

Never at any time particularly keen upon social functions

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of this kind, and, it must be confessed, not a little disappointed at the tarrying of his idol, Fielding, about midnight, wandered aimlessly into the heavy scent-laden air of the winter-garden.

Lighting a cigarette, he seated himself in a comfortable bamboo reclining chair, and fell into a dreamy muse.

A voice, a woman's voice, close behind him—not loud, but distinct, clear, unmistakable—smote on his ear with the force and snap of a pistol-shot.

"I tell you," it said, and there was a ring of triumphant wickedness in the tone of it, "the man is a fool! To-morrow he will speak, and then—then, when, in a few months, I have shaken myself free of him, you and I will reap the reward; for I, my dear, will marry you the very next day."

"It sounds all very pretty," said a man's voice, in deep, guttural tones, "but how if he does *not* come up to the scratch—how then?"

"But he will, my friend! He will, for I have him wound round my little finger."

"Oh, I know your tricks and wiles, Vashti, and it makes me hot and murderous when I see you exercising them upon another man. Still, there *may* be a slip; nothing is sure in this world, sweetheart!"

"Again, I tell you this thing is as sure—as death. Leave me now, and mix among the crowd in the reception room. He does not yet know that I am here. I go now to seek him. Leave me, I say, it would be fatal to our plans were he, by any chance, to find us here!"

"Pardon me, madam!" and the tall soldierly figure rose slowly from the chair behind the group of palms, towering magnificently above the pair of self-confessed plotters. "Pardon me, but I would beg of you to spare yourself the trouble of—of seeking me out. This—this gentleman will also, I am sure, rejoice in the fact that there need be no delay, even of a few months, in the completion of his happiness. I have the honour of wishing you, Miss Endicott, and you, sir, a very good evening."

Captain Lew Cole, U.S.A., made a movement to stay the young Englishman; but in obedience to a warning hand-pressure on his arm, thought better of it, and merely bowed in sulky response to Vivian Fielding's somewhat contemptuous parting salutation.

The latter was ignorant of his unprincipled rival's name; indeed, never came to know it until years afterwards, when the episode was finally closed.

Vashti Endicott from that evening disappeared from Washington, the Potomac Rangers in like manner suddenly lacking a captain.

Subsequently, however, an American friend of Fielding's told him of having seen the lady driving in Hyde Park, London, in fashionable guise. Unfortunately, the opportunity for either Fielding or his friend to confirm this never came, Vashti Endicott (if she it were), as if conscious of observation, and not desiring it, vanishing into space again.

It was then, with the memory of this past experience strong upon him, that Vivian Fielding awaited the arrival at Wyndham's house of the mysterious Mrs. Dundas Muir.

But it was fated not to be—yet.

Early on Saturday morning, at the breakfast-table, Wyndham received a wire.

"Hallo!" he cried. "Here's a bit of a disappointment, old chap! The widow isn't coming after all — can't come. Has gone, in fact, to Paris on important and urgent business."

"Yes, I am disappointed," said the other quietly, "in a way."

"I wrote yesterday to Mrs. Cottrell," Wyndham went on, "and told her that Mr. Vivian Fielding, M.T.C., the celebrated explorer and big game sportsman, was here."

"You did!" cried Fielding quickly. "Then—then I am not surprised that 'The Lady from London'—the charming widow, Mrs. Dundas Muir, has suddenly found it necessary to visit Paris at this particular moment, instead of honouring 'Upcotes' with her presence to-day."

"Surprised! But why?"

"I would rather not explain—yet. I can only say that all things considered, it is a very remarkable coincidence."

CHAPTER II.

The Fitting-in of the Puzzle.

Vivian Fielding was up in town, staying for a few days with his married sister, Lady Pierpoint.

He had been induced to come, at his sister's pleading, but sorely against his inclination, to take part in a big society function, nothing less than a gorgeous fancy-dress ball at the Grafton Galleries.

On the morning of the event, Fielding at luncheon asked his sister if she knew anything of a Mrs. Dundas Muir, a young and beautiful widow.

Lady Pierpoint was in the act of replying in the negative when Jack Wyndham was announced.

"Good Heavens! What's the trouble, man?" cried Fielding. "You look as if that worm Hamlet talks about had got a good grip of your damasked cheek. But, seriously, old fellow, what's the matter?"

"Fielding, you remember that Mrs. Dundas Muir, the widow—'The Lady from London' as you styled her?"

"Yes! I remember. Well, what of her?"

He asked the question with a certain amount of eagerness, as if suddenly aroused to an interest in the subject of it.

"This; you know Kemble—Scots Guards Kemble—I met him an hour ago at the club, where I dropped in on my way from Waterloo to your place here."

"Yes; but what's that to do with the fair widow?"

"Much, if what Kemble says be true; and I've no reason for believing it to be otherwise."

"This is interesting, Jack—go on. But, half a moment! Evelyn, just leave us alone, there's a good girl, for half-an-hour."

He made the request of his sister in a peculiarly masterful way; more as if he expected her to do as he wished without let or demur.

"Now, Jack!" he resumed quietly, when they were alone.

"Well, Harry Kemble, whose father is, you know, chairman of the Metropolitan Banking Company, says that the bank where Mrs. Dundas Muir opened an account last month has, within the past week, had presented over its counter cheques of hers, through leading London tradesmen and others, to an amount running into five figures."

"More interesting still! Well?"

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"A certain young ass in Kemble's own regiment, Lord Westfield's son—you remember him, young Archie Brent—has this morning in person, not only made good the lady's overdraw, but has actually paid in to Mrs. Muir's account a sum of twenty thousand pounds."

"That's enough, Jack! I've heard of young Brent's infatuation for someone concerning whom little or nothing was known, and that he was actually on the eve of marriage with the lady. Now, do you know where young Brent can be found?"

"No, I don't, but Kemble dropped that the Hon. Archie and himself were to put in an appearance at the Grafton Galleries ball to-night."

"That will do. Say nothing to anybody, Jack. Don't whisper to your shadow, even; and if you're very keen-eyed and watchful I think I can promise you that you will see to-night the playing out of a little drama that will amply reward your pains."

"Well! I am all in the dark. You seem to know more than I do."

"Do I? Perhaps I do. Now listen. What do you say young Brent is going as—a Pierrot?"

"So Kemble says."

"Any distinguishing mark that you know of?"

"His costume, Kemble says, will be of white satin, his vizard red."

"It is as though you were aware that I should want to know this. Either that, or that Fate is unusually kind."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I should have been ignorant of it, only that the question of fancy dress incidentally came up, and Kemble instanced Brent's dress as something out of the ordinary."

"The fact that it is so will probably save that foolishly erratic young gentleman from committing himself to a course that would assuredly lead to his undoing."

"You say so; and therefore I suppose that it is so; but for the life of me I can see no link between you and these people, or understand why you are so concerned to play *deus ex machina* in the drama you speak of."

"No? Don't try to understand, or to see, old fellow—yet! Take my word for it, things will pan out much as I prophecy they will, so that when the curtain falls, everybody—including yours truly—but excepting one or two of the principals—will, I fancy, be perfectly satisfied with the ending of the piece, which will be in the good old fashion of virtue rewarded and vice punished."

CHAPTER III.

The Fancy Dress Ball at the Grafton Galleries.

The rooms were crowded.

From theatre and dinner-party, from social entertainments innumerable, came shoals of people, many of them possessors of historic names and of names to conjure with. As for beauty, it had all its own way that night.

Wyndham, who had arrived about half-past eleven, with Lady Pierpoint's party, looked about in every direction for his friend, but Fielding was invisible.

The satin-robed Pierrot was there, and curiously quiet for one of his character.

Just after the stroke of twelve, a figure wrapped from head to foot in a scarlet domino approached the Pierrot and whispered in his ear.

The effect was electrical.

"In the room beyond? And—and as Luna, did you say?"

"Yes, but do not speak so loud. You are to come to her in a quarter of an hour from now. She will then be ready to leave. Everything is arranged; the carriage, the tickets for Paris. In a quarter of an hour."

Pierrot was now all excitement. He acted in a most ridiculous fashion. Leaping, curvetting, mopping and mowing, he soon became the observed of all.

Bye-and-bye he had contrived to antic his way to the spot in the further room indicated by the red domino.

Surely enough, a lady attired as Luna, in clinging folds of black material, with silver crescents wrought upon it, and with a big diamond crescent in her hair, was standing as if in expectation, watching the door of communication.

Near by her was red a domino, with an immense fur cloak over one arm.

There was only a step between the two figures and a door leading into a long passage that gave on to the entrance-hall.

The Pierrot approached Luna.

"I am ready," he whispered, the perspiration streaming down his face from his recent exertions. "My man has arranged for me to change *en route*; so that Dover reached no one will be the wiser."

"My maid Felice, will do the same for me."

"Now," interrupted red domino, "it is time."

As he spoke, he led Luna through the door, signing to Pierrot to follow. Then he enveloped the lady in the fur cloak, which completely enshrouded her.

Pierrot was about to take a long travelling coat with a hood from a young fellow in groom's livery, who stepped forward with it in his hand, as the party of three made to descend the steps of the building to the street, where a brougham and pair was waiting to take up.

At that moment a gentleman in evening dress hurriedly passed out after them, and on the kerb laid his hand on Luna's arm.

"Forgive me, Miss Endicott, otherwise Mrs. Dundas Muir, but I am afraid that you will be unable to avail yourself of your ticket for Paris; that you must, for awhile, at least, postpone your journey."

The woman shivered perceptibly, and cowered against the side of the carriage.

Pierrot's bewilderment was pitiably absurd.

"Who are you, sir?" he stammered to Fielding, "and what right have you to interfere with my—with this lady's business?"

"Don't be a fool, Brent!" whispered the other. "Come out of this to my rooms, and I will convince you that I am swayed by the best of motives as towards yourself."

Meanwhile, Lew Cole, the man in the red domino, slipped through the crowd of waiting vehicles, and was seen no more, his companion being permitted at last to drive away.

Fielding's last words to the latter were that he would have her every movement watched until she was out of the country.

In the small hours of the next morning, young Brent told Fielding the story of his almost criminal foolishness.

It appeared that the young Guardsman regarded ex-Captain Lew Cole as Vashti's brother; and that the precious pair's idea must have been by the flight to Paris—where, having got from their dupe all the loot possible, they would undoubtedly have left him—to compromise Archie Brent in the eyes alike of Society and of his friends.

Vivian Fielding says to-day that, but for the desire to save young Brent from the wiles of the woman who had in the past worked her wicked will upon himself, he would have repented of his revenge, and have let the principal sinner alone.

As it was, beyond foiling her plan with regard to Lord Westfield's son and heir, Fielding's action had no punitive result.

Brent's money (irrevocably gone) saved the woman and her American husband from a serious danger in connection with the bank. There was a doubt as to whether the pair could not have been proceeded against for conspiracy, but it was decided to let the matter drop, on the condition that they should leave the metropolis and the kingdom for over sea, which, under the supervision of Scotland Yard, they did forthwith.

Nothing definite has since been heard of Vashti Endicott—or Cole—though Vivian Fielding is half inclined to recognise in the chief female character in a recent New York criminal trial, the lovely, but altogether impossible "Lady from London."

Ralph Enderby.

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The father rested his hand on her head, caressing the glossy hair.

CHAPTER I.
The Address.

THE guests were all departing, and soon the large rooms of "Eagle's Nest" would be empty again. At the window, carelessly watching the stream of carriages bearing away the numerous acquaintances who had been at her birthday party, stood a young girl, caressing the rough head of a thoroughbred little terrier, whose name—"Vedo"—sparkled in precious stones on a noticeably handsome golden collar. The last carriage had not yet started, when a gentleman entered the room as if in search of someone. On seeing the graceful figure at the window he hastily approached, and, laying his hand gently on her round white arm, he exclaimed:

"My answer, Myowne! Ah, give me hope; only a little hope—say yes."

With a crimson flush mounting to her proud young face she turned and raised her eyes to his; there was something like a smile playing round the rosy lips as she spoke: "But do you really love me?"

"Have I not told you so? Shall I swear it by all I hold most dear—your own sweet self?"

"No, Mr. Elliot, swear not at all, but think how unsuited I am to be your wife. Our ideas are not in common; your life is different from mine. Let us remain friends."

"Friends!" exclaimed her companion, while a strange light flashed in his grey eyes. "You and I cannot be friends. Explain yourself—you owe it to my love. Why can you not be my wife?"

Myowne bent her head and caressed the little dog in her arms. After a moment's thought she looked up, and her voice trembled as she answered: "You have done me the honour to offer me your hand——"

"Say my love, for they both go together!" exclaimed the man, looking eagerly into the bright face beside him.

What her answer would have been cannot be told, for at that moment a young man entered the room, and, seeing the pair near the window, respectfully approached.

"Pardon my intrusion, Miss Gleniln, but your father was asking for you, and wishes to see you before retiring."

With a sigh of relief the young girl turned to the new-comer.

"Please tell my father I will join him instantly;" and as he left the room she continued: "You will, I am sure, excuse me, Mr. Elliot, it is very late, and my father waits. Permit me to bid you good-night."

"Who and what is that man?" inquired Mr. Elliot, ignoring her remark, and with his eyes still fixed on the door.

"That gentleman's name is Carlyon; he is my father's secretary. Good-night, Mr. Elliot." And, proudly drawing up her little figure, Miss Gleniln turned away. But her companion hastened to intercept her at the door, and eagerly whispered—

"May I see you to-morrow?"

"Not too early, please; I shall scarcely be visible before noon." And she would have gone, but he seized the hand at her side to raise it to his lips, when a sharp growl from Vedo stayed him. He dropped her hand, and Myowne was gone.

"Death to that white-faced fellow for coming in and

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interfering just at the most important moment! I feel like a tiger thirsting for his blood; and her little dog too—all against me. Ah!" he continued, changing his mood, "she is a dainty morsel; proud, too, as a queen. Her airs of superiority become her now; but later on, when her haughty ladyship is mine, she must learn new ways, and perhaps——"

His thoughts were brought to an abrupt close by the entrance of a footman, who, apologising for intruding, asked the belated guest if he would take some wine before leaving. Uttering an impatient negative, Mr. Elliot left the room, found his wraps, and slowly quitted the house.

It was a rough, cold night; the wind had risen and was tearing down the street; in an instant it had lifted Mr. Elliot's hat and sent it spinning along the road, and as that worthy hurried after it he uttered a bitter oath.

When Myowne joined her father she became aware that some trouble was weighing heavily upon him. His usually genial, pleasant face was clouded, and his manner nervous. He spoke slowly and deliberately, as if repeating a carefully-prepared lesson, often passing a long, lean hand over his delicate face.

"Myowne, the time has come to speak to you without reserve; try to understand me. My darling, I have tried to be a good father to you."

Myowne looked into the face which, above all others, she loved dearly, and, sinking on a hassock, she clasped her hands on her father's knee.

"You have ever been all that is good and kind, and I love you with all my heart."

The father rested his hand on her head, caressing the glossy hair.

"People say I am rich—so I am; but we all have our troubles, Myowne, and I have mine. When your Uncle Emanuel died he left his wealth to you on one condition—that you should marry the gentleman who perchance might make you a proposal on this day, or, in default thereof, accept the first offer after this birthday."

Myowne suddenly paled, and her hands trembled on her father's knee.

"Now it so happens that I had an offer for your hand this morning from Harrison Elliot, the son of my old friend, whose wife—well—well, she loved him, not me, and this is her son, who loves you. He is well-to-do, will make his mark ere long, and—and——"

The uneven, wavering voice ceased as Mr. Gleniln's eyes rested on his daughter's pale face.

"And what did you tell him?"

"I sent him to you." And in a more steady voice he continued: "Your Uncle Emanuel was a bachelor; he never married because he loved once and lost. After you were born he set all the affection of his heart on you, and when you were eight years old he died, making you his heiress on the condition he mentioned, and also bequeathing to me a considerable sum. If you refuse, however, the whole fortune would revert to a distant cousin."

"And if it was so would you suffer?" asked Myowne.

"Not severely, though I must confess I have counted on my very generous share to retrieve some heavy losses. Did Harrison propose to you to-day?" There was something half of eagerness, half of trouble, in the question.

"Yes, father, he did."

"And you."

"I—I shall see him again during to-morrow."

"You love him, then?" asked her father, as if with relief.

"I don't know my own heart; I think I love no one but you."

The words were sadly spoken as the head again drooped; then suddenly she added: "Does Mr. Elliot know about the will?"

"Mr. Elliot is in Messrs. Goldroy's office, where the will has been kept since your uncle made it—he may know something about it; but that thought could hardly influence his love for you. He tells me he has thought of you for years."

There was a slightly incredulous look in the large, dark eyes raised to her father's face as Myowne rose from her seat.

"Tell me, father—will it please you to see this marriage without considering the will?"

"Yes, child, it will please me, for he is her son, and must be good and true, as she was. Still I would not force you to do anything against your wish."

"And these losses that you mentioned—will the money that comes to you really be a help?" How timidly she spoke! How nervously the fingers of her hands twined and untwined! Mr. Gleniln was almost as uneasy as herself, but he tried to speak calmly.

"Yes, I do need the money, though I could manage without."

Myowne looked at the loved face before her, and then clasping her arms round her father's neck, she kissed him gently, saying with an effort—

"Good-night, dear dad; I'll think it over, and tell you later." And before he could reply she had left the room.

Mr. Gleniln gave a sigh of mingled content and anxiety as he murmured:

"Her son! Am I right? Yes; her son could never be anything if not good and true." And with these words repeating themselves in his mind he sought repose.

It was near the late dinner-hour when Myowne was informed that Mr. Elliot was in the drawing-room. With trembling steps she descended the long flight of stairs, and as she reached the lower one her foot slipped, and she would have fallen had it not been for Mr. Carlyon, who at that moment happened to approach.

"Are you hurt?" he asked eagerly.

"No, thank you; only a little shaken."

The next instant she entered the spacious drawing-room. Mr. Elliot was standing with his back to the fire, watching the door. In the firelight, with the red glow on his dark hair and the glad light in his eyes, even to Myowne's eyes he appeared at his best. But there was no timid reserve in the girl's manner as she advanced towards him. He held out his hand, and as she placed hers in it the words fell quickly from his lips:

"Myowne, I have come for my answer; what is my fate to be?"

Without drawing away her hand the girl quietly looked up into his eyes, and as she spoke her voice sounded low and constrained.

"You wish me for your wife. Will you, then, answer me one or two questions honestly, truthfully?"

With some dignity he replied: "I could not answer otherwise than truthfully when it is you who ask."

Gently, and as if unintentionally, she withdrew her hand from his.

"Forgive me. You ask my reply to one question. I would have your answer first. You told me yesterday

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that you love me. I do not wish to doubt you; but if I were poor and helpless, would you love me then as now?"

With an exclamation of joy Mr. Elliot bent forward, about to clasp Myowne in his arms. He had long hungered for a kiss from those proud young lips, and seeing her as she was now, so gentle and kindly-spoken, he felt the desire very strong upon him; but she put out her hand to keep him off, and, controlling the passion within him, he answered:

"I would love you always as now."

"You do not, then, marry for money. I am glad to know this, for I shall be very rich before long, and I intend settling some of the wealth I shall inherit upon my father, and I might not so readily be able to do so if my husband were in love with gold."

There was a sinister light in his grey eyes, but it instantly disappeared as he asked: "And is this all?"

"Not quite all," she answered, more softly than before, and looking down. "I would like you to understand one thing clearly. If I marry you——"

"If you marry me! Then—oh! my darling, you do love me?"

But Myowne drew away. "I wish I could say so. It is this I wanted to tell you." And now for the first time a slight blush rose to her face. "I never knew any other love than that which fills my heart for my dear father. Will you then, and can you teach me that other lesson I, a willing pupil, would gladly learn from you?"

With rapture Elliot clasped her in his arms, and so closely, and his lips rested on hers so passionately, that with a slight cry of fear she withdrew from his embrace, and half-smiling, shyly whispered: "Wait—I—I—am not your wife yet. Go to my father; I think he expects you." And without another word she hastily left the room.

"Teach her the lesson of love! Ye gods, what a glorious task! What a pleasure to kindle light in those dark eyes of hers! She shall learn to love me, I swear it; and it should be an easy matter. We shall see, we shall see! Let the past die. It must be forgotten. The future rises on golden wings."

Six months after the wedding took place, and fashion proclaimed it the great event of the season. Bridesmaids, groomsmen, guests, flowers, favours, presents, music, speeches, toasts, and good wishes. A handsome new carriage, white horses, and away to the station in a shower of rice; alone together, and off for the honeymoon.

CHAPTER II.

The Letter.

The night was cold and cheerless, just such another night as that one ten years ago. At a window watching the weather, the pedestrians, as they battled with the wind, the vehicles passing to and fro, stood a woman, still and pale, dreaming dreams one within another, and all falling to pieces one after another. Only once she partly turned, when the door opened and a man entered the room. Even then in the semi-darkness she drew closer to the window, almost as if to avoid notice. But a strange voice, uttering her name, called her forth, and, with trembling fingers, she raised the lowered light, exclaiming:

"Good Heavens! Mr. Carlyon!"

"Pardon my intrusion, Mrs. Elliot," said that gentleman. "I have sought you everywhere; I am the bearer of news. Can you hear it calmly if I give it you now?"

There was a long pause, during which the visitor noted the plainly-furnished, small room, the weary look of the lady, and contrasted all this with what had been ten years ago.

Myowne spoke, but her voice had lost the fresh ring of former years, and was sadly broken. "I—I am so glad to see you; it seems like the dear old times of long ago. And you come from my father? You have news—a letter? Ah! tell me quickly, and relieve my anxiety."

"You do not look well; take a glass of wine before reading this. Believe me, you need all your courage."

"Thanks," she answered gently. "I never touch wine now; it—it does not agree with me. But why do you look so grave? You know what this letter contains? My—dear—father—is—"

"You have guessed the sorrowful truth. He is at rest."

With a calmness whose effort was sad to contemplate, Myowne read the letter through.

"Will you kindly explain why this letter is dated six years ago?"

"I will endeavour to explain everything. You remember the dreadful failure of the bank which, two years after your marriage, ruined you and Mr. Gleniln?"

"Shall I ever forget it?" murmured Myowne.

"You left England hardly a month later, just before he returned from the continent, where he had been staying for his health. Everything had to be sold, and Mr. Gleniln never quite recovered after that. He travelled about from place to place, utterly hopeless,

"Vedo's collar! How did you get that back?"

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and not even trying to rouse himself. The little he had left sufficed to keep him till the end came, two years later. I saw him a few days before, when he charged me to place that letter, his last farewell, in your own hands. There is not much more to tell," continued her companion. "I had heard of the Australian gold-fields, and intended seeking my fortune there. I also knew that you had gone to that country with Mr. Elliot two years before, and I hoped to find you.

"When I first arrived here I made every possible inquiry but failed in tracing you. I was taken ill soon after, and nursed back to life by a young fellow who had been at the diggings and intended returning. On my recovery he persuaded me to join him, and I did so. Three weeks ago I returned to Melbourne, intending to spend a little while there, and to make further inquiries before starting for home, having been fortunate enough to make what out here we call 'my pile.'"

Myowne had listened intently, yet with the same weary look in her dark eyes. She congratulated him, and asked how he had found her out. In a hesitating voice Carlyon replied:

"Why, in rather a singular fashion. You see, I bought a dog, a small rough terrier. I wanted a collar for the little fellow, and in a window of a second-hand shop I saw one," (here he lowered his voice almost to a whisper) "bearing the name I knew so well, 'Vedo.' To my mind there was but one Vedo. Where the collar was, or had been, the dog might be, and there I should find his mistress. After three weeks' patient search I traced you; and here," he added softly, "is Vedo's collar." He gently placed it in the hand that lay on her lap, and, with delicacy of feeling, turned to the window.

The weather outside was still boisterous, but it was now raining fast, and gusts of wind rattled the ill-fastened window. The little clock on the mantelpiece in a weak-minded, feeble manner informed him that it was six. As he turned he found Myowne had left her seat and was standing near him. She seemed almost unable to speak, but held out her hand to him; as he took it in both of his a sad smile came to her lips, and she said:

"Gold has brought me much sorrow, but in poor Vedo's golden collar it has to-night given me a friend." Then, hastily withdrawing her hand, she turned towards the door. "I would ask you to stay and—and meet my husband, but I don't know when he will be home, and perhaps your time——"

"Your clock just now warned me that I have little time left. It is six, and business calls me even at this hour, for I expect to leave Melbourne for England next week. May I venture to hope I shall see you once more?"

Myowne looked up in her own proud way. "Indeed, I will be pleased to see you. I shall expect you soon again." And Carlyon left the room, while Myowne wearily sank into a chair.

Hardly a moment later the door was roughly opened, and Mr. Elliot entered. He was little altered, the added years became him, and the fire of his eyes was unquenched. As he approached Myowne went towards him and raised her face to his.

"What's the matter now?" he exclaimed impatiently. "Always wanting to be kissed like a child. Will you never become sensible? Pshaw! don't bother me." And he turned away, hardly noticing the pained look in his wife's face. "Who has been here this afternoon?" he continued, taking a pipe off the mantelpiece and filling it.

"No one for you, dear," was the quiet reply.

The pipe lit, Harrison, as usual, made himself comfortable in the arm-chair, and, looking round the room, his eye fell upon Mr. Gleniln's letter lying near him.

"What letter is that?"

"A—a letter from my father."

"Your father, eh? He has been long enough writing it. What does the old fool say for himself?"

"Ah! don't, Harrison; don't speak of him like that."

"Like what? Calling him an old fool? He was an old fool, or he would never have been ruined, or made a fool of me. Confound him! What are you whimpering about now? Always turning the tap on. It is enough to try the patience of a saint to be tied to a woman who is only a spiritless burden. I could get along first-rate if I were alone; I always did before I was silly enough to get married. Now I have to support a wife and find myself on nothing." And Mr. Elliot, feeling himself very much injured, viciously puffed at his pipe. Myowne was evidently used to these outbursts of temper, for she did not immediately reply. Then, with a little gasp of a half-suppressed sigh she said very gently and pleadingly—

"Remember, Harrison, dear, I have done all I could for you; be just. We have had so much trouble, that it has broken my spirit."

"That's right!" exclaimed the man; "rub it in, reproach me, throw it into my teeth that I dragged you down! Tell me I ruined your life and spoilt your chances; bring it up as often as you can, till you goad me into a passion, and then put on an air of injured innocence, and make me out a heartless wretch. I suppose I gave up nothing in marrying you?"

Myowne looked down upon her husband with a strange expression in her eyes.

"I thought you married me because you loved me."

"There! now you are getting into the sentimental mood. Loved you? What an ass I should have been not to have loved a girl with such a fortune as you were to have; but, confound my luck, everything always was against me, and smash went your father's bank."

"Then—you never really cared for me—at—all?"

"Cared for you? Oh, yes; you were a very fascinating, enticing, innocent little girl then, and that sort of thing generally attracts a man. But after you were once my wife—well, you see, the bloom was off the peach, and there was nothing more to—to wish for." A short, coarse laugh ended the sentence, which Mr. Elliot considered an exceedingly witty one.

"But," timidly remarked Myowne, "you said——"

"Of course I said, any man in my position would have done and said as I said and did. I wanted your money, and I wanted yourself while the fancy lasted, and when I wearied of you, soon after our three months' honeymoon, then I wanted your money without you."

"Why could you not love me for myself alone? Was that impossible?" And there was something infinitely touching in the soft, quivering voice.

"Why? Because you are not my style. I like a woman with some spirit. There, drop the subject. We are tied together, and, I suppose, must make the best of it. What does your father say in his letter?"

"My father wrote the letter six years ago. He—is—dead." With the last word Myowne's head fell, and she covered her face.

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"Dead, eh! What will become of the money he lived upon? By George! he might have left it to us."

"He could not. Don't you remember it was an annuity, and died with him?"

"Yes, of course; that is just like his mean selfishness. How did the letter find you?"

"Mr. Carlyon had it with him for six years, and only succeeding in finding us to-day."

"That white-faced puppy! I'd like to horsewhip him within an inch of his life. I suppose that was the man I knocked against in the dark passage. Great Moses! if I had known who it was. Like his infernal impudence to dare to call upon you! Your father's paid hireling! I'd like to make him dance!"

"Remember, Harrison, Mr. Carlyon is a gentleman."

"Hold your tongue, you—you——"

"Ah, don't, don't!" And trembling violently, Myowne shrunk away from her husband's chair, and as she did so her eyes suddenly fell upon Vedo's collar still lying on the table, and in an instant her husband had possessed himself of it.

"Vedo's collar, by all that's holy! How did you get that back? Speak, or by Heaven, I'll——"

In a few trembling words Myowne related the story.

"So he gave you your dog's collar. After buying it in a pawnshop, he offered it to you, his master's daughter—you whom he had the audacity to love!"

"What!" exclaimed Myowne, now breathless with excitement.

"Oh! I knew it in the old days. It was plain enough. I often wondered you didn't see it yourself. I hated him from the first; I hated his smooth-spoken tongue, his superior airs, his dignity—dignity, forsooth! in a hireling. You must return this collar at once. You don't want it, as the dog is dead. Do you hear what I say?"

"But, Harrison, I do not even know where Mr. Carlyon lives; besides, it seems so unkind, after his kindness."

"Are you going to teach me right from wrong?" exclaimed her husband, turning upon her furiously, with threatening arm upraised. "Mark me, you jade, I don't care one jot how or when you do it, but return that collar you shall! Do you understand me? If you don't——".

Myowne, who had turned very pale, and shivered, hesitated a moment; then, overcoming her unwillingness, and kneeling down beside her husband, she clasped her arms round his neck.

"Harrison, dear, forgive me if I ask you not to urge me to do this. I have always tried to be good and true to you—always obeyed you in all things; please don't insist in this matter." And as she spoke she drew nearer, and touched his cheek with her lips. It was but a moment. She could never clearly remember how it really did happen.

There was a sharp knock at the door just as he was roughly pushing her away, trying to disengage himself from the clinging arms; and before she could fully rise to her feet his heavy hand struck her, and she fell prone to the ground.

"Botheration!" exclaimed Elliot, as he raised his now insensible wife and laid her on the sofa; and, finding the knocking continued, he opened the door to greet a telegraph boy with a message for him. While reading it his yes fell upon Myowne. "What infernal luck I have! Everything is always against me," he muttered between his teeth. "I must go at once to the hotel, or, by Heavens! there will be trouble. The dickens take the woman!"

Doubly bewildered now, he stared helplessly at his wife, dropped the telegram on the table, and then dashed water into her white, still face, till she revived and very painfully raised herself, with the half-whispered words:

"Thank you, I am better now."

"That is a comfort anyhow. I am thankful for small mercies in these pleasant times. I have to see a fellow on business at once; don't suppose I shall be long." And thus saying, he left the room.

It was some time before Myowne could collect her scattered senses, but, after a while, she slowly and gradually remembered, and, with a sigh, tried ineffectually to rise.

And now, as a panorama, appeared the pictures of her past life—so full of comfort and of love the earlier ones; so full of misery, of lovelessness, the ones that followed. The respectful, kindly face of her father's

Carlyon gently placed his hands upon her shoulders.

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secretary, of the happy by-gone times—more kindly, as she had lately seen it—was the picture which seemed to present itself most vividly to her. Shuddering, as with cold, she wearily closed her eyes. Some time later the little clock, in its usual apologetic tones, announced that it was seven, and Myowne rose, still weak and shaken. On the table lay the telegram, and, still preoccupied with her thoughts, almost unconsciously she read aloud :

" Just arrived from England ; at Turner's hotel. If you don't come to me at once, shall call at your house. " Pauline Marryat."

The last word had hardly passed her lips, and Myowne was still trying to understand what she had been reading when, after a light tap at the door, a woman entered. She was of a fine figure, set off by fashionable dress ; a decidedly handsome face, rich auburn hair, with the glint of gold in it ; and fine bluish-grey eyes, that sparkled like jewels. Her features were clear-cut, and the face would have been called a good one but for the thick-lipped mouth, which curved disagreeably. The lady looked round the room with a contemptuous smile.

" Excuse me, I called to see Mr. Elliot."

Myowne looked at the stranger calmly. " Mr. Elliot is out. I presume you are the Pauline Marryat mentioned here ? " And she held up the telegram.

" Yes, I am Miss Marryat," answered the stranger, seating herself in the arm-chair. " If the gentleman is out, I shall wait till he returns."

A little of the long-lost spirit of former days came to Myowne's aid, and, facing her visitor, she said more sharply than was her wont :

" It would be better if you returned later ; it is not convenient for you to remain here. I must ask you to leave this room."

" Hoity toity ! We are on our dignity, eh ? Not con-ve-ni-ent ? We'll soon see about that. I don't think Mr. Elliot will turn me out. Who are you, pray ? " And the angry woman rose from her seat, staring boldly at Myowne.

" I am Mr. Elliot's wife."

" His wife ! I thought you were his servant. Merciful Heavens ! Was it for such an insignificant thing that my Harrison left me ? I could have borne it better had you been something to look at ; but pale, thin, too, and—faugh ! He must have been mad."

Myowne was almost speechless, hardly knowing how to answer this tirade. She hesitated, trying to choose her words, and after an effort said :

" I know nothing of you but your name ; you know who I am, and are evidently acquainted with my husband. You owe it to me, having entered my room unasked, to at least tell me what you want with Mr. Elliot, and who and what you are."

" That you shall soon know. I was Harrison Elliot's promised wife ; he loved me passionately, and only left me to marry your gold. You never could have cared for him, as I did—as I do still, in spite of his cruelty in throwing me over and leaving me deserted, alone to fight the world's slanderous tongue—and he knows all this—and he loves me the same as ever, and has done so all along. So much for you, my fine ladybird ! But I swore I'd be revenged on you, and I will. I hate you, you miserable piece of humanity."

In her excitement, with shining eyes and burning cheeks, the woman approached Myowne closer, and with an evil look, as if intending to strike her, she hurled these words at her—" I'd have you die in misery and wretchedness, unloved, neglected, and alone. May you be accursed as my life has been through you, for you robbed me of the only human being I ever loved ! "

With such wildness had Pauline Marryat spoken that her voice drowned every other noise. In the midst of her cruel speech the door had been pushed open unnoticed, and in the momentary silence that followed Mr. Carlyon stepped forward.

" Pardon me, is this lady here with your consent, Mrs. Elliot ? "

" No, indeed. Her desire was to see Mr. Elliot ; but he went out about half-past six. I think almost immediately after receiving this telegram."

" Half—past—six," slowly and mechanically repeated Miss Marryat. " Half—past—six—received—and I sent that telegram at nine o'clock this morning. He must at once have gone to the hotel, and I thought his absence intentional and have missed him."

She was now wonderfully subdued, and hastily left the room.

There was a pause, during which the tears were fast gathering in Myowne's eyes.

" Pardon me," said Carlyon, " but when I took out the letter from your father I must have dropped a paper of great value to me. Ah, here it is." Turning to Mrs. Elliot, he was startled to see her with her face buried in the sofa cushion, sobbing bitterly. The silence in the room, the monotonous ticking of the clock, the rain beating against the window, and the painful, now quite uncontrollable sobs of the poor girl whom he so tenderly loved, made the time a most trying one for him. Everything seemed a living, sentient being ; everything had a voice, and urged him to comfort the unhappy creature before him.

" Mrs. Elliot, I beseech you, tell me—say what can I do for you ? " He paused anxiously, then took a few steps nearer to the sofa, and instinctively lowered his voice. " Speak to me. Ah ! let me but hear your voice."

Myowne heard him now. The sobs became less violent, and gradually ceased ; and after a little while she raised her head. And there was that in the soft eyes fixed upon her which she knew had always been there, only that formerly she did not understand it ; now it thrilled her to the heart, and her own eyes, still heavy with weeping, dropped before his. To speak was impossible, and Carlyon, his whole being stirred within him, turned away. A moment later a hand was laid upon his arm, and Myowne stood beside him. With something of an effort she looked up into his face, while

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

" May I speak, and will you forgive me if, in doing so, I give you pain ? "

" You are incapable of giving pain," he answered, slowly laying his hand on the one still resting on his arm. " There are some beings at whose hands death itself would be the sweetest gift ; to suffer for them is a privilege, and heaven itself draws very near to earth when we bear love's burden."

While he was speaking Myowne had drawn back a little and her hand fell from his. She found it difficult to reply, and her voice trembled as she spoke.

" I have not much to say—but—I think it right. Will you hear me, and—and——"

" Ah, do not shrink ! I must speak ! I will speak, come what may ! I can be silent no longer. Scorn me if you must, I——"

She turn'd her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs,
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes.

"Speak not the word; let it not pass your lips, or the sweet spell will be broken, I thought to give you pain, yet wished to bid you go before you revealed the secret of our hearts. But I was too late—so late, so late. I think I knew in the dear old days but to me it was so strange and wonderful a mystery. I never understood till now; I have learnt the lesson since. But it is a dream, a fancy, something we can think about that will help us to be good and true as long as life remains."

"Life! Ah! what is life when separation makes it worthless," exclaimed Carlyon, gazing intently into the shining eyes raised so trustingly to his.

"Life! Life is like a myth, a phantom; to-day in our hands, to-morrow taken from us—gone like a breath that kisses the lips it touches. We live for others, not ourselves. We will try to forget what could not be; you will forget——"

"No, I cannot promise what I cannot keep. To forget what makes life worth living would be a living death. Ask me not what is impossible. Remember that I——"

She smiled a sad, wistful smile, shyly taking one of his hands. "For my sake—I know all you would say, believe me; I know all I could say, but we must be silent if we would be true. As now our hands are locked, so let our hearts, our souls, our minds be locked always together—always living in and through, and for each other. And then to meet hereafter, you and I; in everything always together!"

Carlyon looked into the beloved face, as if wishing to fix each feature indelibly on his memory, and he said, gently and tenderly, "Yes, in everything always together; truly

> "'Tis said, though from the body riven,
> The spirit ne'er can cease to be.
> Then, till it gains that other Heaven.
> Mine shall—ay, must, still cling to thee."

A hush. So still, as if some spirit, passing through the air, was sending from his pearly wings a mystic, wondrous light, and for a moment two poor mortals, forgetting all the world, were happy. Ah, how rare, how fleeting, was that beam of happiness!

Carlyon, overcome by her earnest words, inspired by her voice, her eyes fixed full on his, her hand clasped fast in his, felt himself a giant fit to fight the world, to live and die for her. She now drew him towards the door, as she spoke in kindly tones:

"Friend, let us part before trouble, swift-footed, finds us both. Say good-night."

Carlyon, still under the influence of the music of her words, gently placed his hands upon her shoulders, and spoke quietly but firmly:

"I will obey you always. But before I go I must speak once, for good and all."

"Oh, don't say it, don't say it," softly murmured Myowne.

"Be not afraid. We need not say what we both know so well. God help us! But I want you to remember I leave to you a precious charge, more precious than the most priceless jewel—life! Guard it well, promise to think that in one fair hand lies yours, in the other—you—hold—mine. Remember our watch-word—'In everything always together'!"

"I will remember."

"And you promise?"

"I promise."

"One word more. I will not see you again till you bid me come. Here is my address," giving her a card on which he pencilled a few words. "It will always find me—even if it be years hence. Send for me the instant I can be of use. Is there anything you would ask me now?"

"Nothing—nothing."

"Will you recollect all I have said?"

"All; every word is graven on my heart, and will remain with me for evermore."

"Then farewell." Hesitating for a moment, he kissed the hand he held, and was gone, as the clock, with great precision and an attempt at self-importance, struck nine.

(To be concluded next week.)

They Hadn't Any.

A GENTLEMAN one day asked a shoeblack, who was cleaning his boots near a theatre in the Strand, if he ever read the newspaper. The boy promptly replied: "Oh, yes, sir; I reads the paper." "What do you read, my lad?" inquired the gentleman. "I reads all about the murders, sir." A policeman standing near, who had heard the conversation, strolled up to the lad when the gentleman had left, and said: "Don't you ever read the police intelligence?" "Get away with you; they ain't got none," answered the sharp boy.

The Press Embraced Her.

"OH, I think it must be nice to be connected with a newspaper," said Miss M'Flinn to young Quill-driver, as they sat together one evening. "Yes, it is so," he replied. "But why do you think it is?" "Why, it has so many advantages. I should think you would glory in the freedom, the power, the liberty, and all the privileges of the Press." "Certainly I do. It's a pity with all your enthusiasm on the subject that you are not a journalist." "I think so too; but you know it is hard for a woman to get recognition. I should be delighted to feel that the Press embraced me." "Oh, you would, would you? Great Scott! wait till I turn down the gas."

THIS IS OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER.

What the String Was For.

Two small boys in a tramcar were watching everything and talking, as boys do, when the conductor's whistle attracted them. "See the whistle," said one. "Yes," said the other; "but what's he got it tied to a string for?" This was a poser for a minute, and then the little one chirped, "I know what for. It's to keep hisself from swallerin' it."

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A Muscular Servant Girl.

A Maid who was Useful in Driving Away Pedlars and Tramps.

ONE of the most unpleasant things in connection with housekeeping in towns is the trouble ladies have in getting rid of the pedlars and tramps who call when the men are all away at their business, and who will crowd themselves into a house, even if the door is shut in their faces.

A couple of gentlemen were talking over such matters a few days since, when one of them said things had come to such a pass that he was going to give up housekeeping and live at an hotel.

"If you get the right kind of servant girl you will have no trouble," said the contented man. "You get the sister to my girl and I will warrant you will be free from such annoyances."

"Oh, servant girls are no good," said the first speaker. "I have tried forty different ones, and the pedlars talk them over, and wind up by selling them something. What does your girl do to keep them away."

"Do? What does she do? Well, it depends on the man. If he will go away quietly, when she tells him that the house doesn't want of anything, it is all right. If not she uses a persuader.

"She is a girl who has been brought up on a farm, a perfect picture of health, with an arm like a blacksmith's, and the pluck of a veteran soldier. She can do more work in a day and smile all the time, than any girl I ever saw.

"I pay her double wages just for the influence she has on pedlars. My wife is an invalid, and is nervous; a pedlar, or a canvasser, could talk her into buying anything, she is so timid, and she would be ill for a week afterwards, with nervous prostration. Mary, the girl, noticed the injury to my wife, and said she would keep the nuisances out, and I told her to do what she could.

"The next day as I went home I met a man tearing down the path, while etchings were dropping all round him from a portfolio. He had his hat jammed down over his eyes, and wore a very worried look. I stopped him at the gate and asked what the matter was.

"He said he had mistaken that lunatic asylum for a private residence, had pushed in when the door was opened, and one of the female inmates, a most violent case, had taken him by the throat, and with a power almost superhuman had thrown him out, and frightened him nearly to death.

"He asked me if I was the doctor of the asylum, and said I ought to put that girl in a straight jacket. He went away quickly, with his collar in his hand, and when I went in the house Mary and my wife were laughing very hard, and my wife was better than I had known her for a year.

"The other day a fellow with the most terrible cheek got into the parlour, and sent a card to my wife by another girl who happened to go to the door. My wife supposed it was some gentleman, and went down. The impudent, hardened rascal talked to her for half an hour on different subjects and then revealed to her that he was taking orders for some book in monthly parts.

"Well, if there is anything my wife doesn't want it is any more 'Shakespeares' or 'Picturesque Zululands' in instalments. Four years ago she subscribed for something of the kind, and they have been delivered regularly every fortnight, and always when my wife didn't happen to have a penny in the house. She told him she didn't want the book in a few well-chosen words, but he insisted that while she thought she didn't want it, she actually did. She pleaded that she did not feel very well, and asked him to call again, but he said he would remain now he was there, and proceeded to show her some more pictures, and tell her how many orders he had taken in that street.

"Some ladies called, and she asked him to excuse her, but he said he would wait till they had gone, and when they came into the parlour he actually joined in the conversation, and asked one of the callers if she wouldn't like to look at the book. He said it was only half-a-crown per month.

"That made my wife furious. She can stand a good deal, and keep her temper, but that was too much, and she rang the bell for Mary. Mary came as smiling and pretty as you ever saw a girl in all your born days.

"My wife said, 'Mary, please conduct this gentleman to the conservatory.'

"Mary smiled, and said, 'This way, please,' and the agent followed her into the front hall, and before he knew whether he was in a conservatory or a boiler factory, Mary took him by the back of the neck and pitched him through the door head first, and down the stone steps on his head. He turned a somersault, lit on his feet, jumped the fence, and ran to a field where some boys were playing football.

"In about half an hour a boy came to the door and said a gentleman who had called a short time before, and who came away somewhat suddenly, begged that the lady of the house would kindly send him his hat and a book of samples of a work he was selling on the instalment plan. He said he was sorry to trouble the lady, but he wanted the hat in order to make a call in the neighbourhood. His things were sent to him, and he has never been back since.

"No, sir; I wouldn't let Mary go for twice what I pay her."

"I wish you would give me the address of Mary's sister," said the young man, taking out a pencil and paper. "If I could get such a girl as that I would continue to keep house." The demand for good muscular girls is increasing, and they can get their own prices.

P. W. OLLING.

IT IS ALWAYS INTERESTING

to know other people's opinion of yourself, especially when that opinion is absolutely unbiassed.

If you want to know what sort of a person you are send a specimen of your handwriting to

RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

enclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

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Too Small to Disobey.

"I CAN command my salary," said the Thespian in reply to the remarks of an envious rival. "No doubt," was the reply. "It is so small it would be afraid to disobey you."

The Wrong Meaning.

DRAWING MASTER: "Now, boys, I want you to draw something out of your own heads." Small Boy (handing master a hair): "Please, sir, will one hair do, 'cos it hurts to pull out many?"

It Had a Language.

SOPHIA (sentimentally): "I dearly love to listen to the ticking of a clock. It seems to me that a clock has a language of its own." Mr. Smart: "Yes, Sophia, the clock has a language—you might say a dial-ect."

Merely a Detail.

HE (after an elopement): "You led me to infer that you would inherit twenty thousand pounds." She: "No, I didn't. I said my father was worth that much." He: "Well, but you never said a word about having fourteen brothers and sisters." She: "I didn't suppose that you wanted to marry the whole family."

Didn't Want to Hurt Him.

"CAN you do anything with my account to-day, sir?" asked a collector. "I'd like to pay it," replied Gazzam, "but the fact is I haven't any gold coin, and the doctors say that paper money carries the influenza microbe about. Can't be too careful, you know, and I wouldn't pay you with paper money for all the world."

George Couldn't Have Noticed.

CLARA: "When George and I are married I'm to have my own way in everything." Dora: "But you won't." Clara: "Indeed I will. That's the bargain. Don't you remember, I told you he proposed in a boat, and asked if I'd float through life with him just that way?" Dora: "Yes." Clara: "Well he was rowing, but I was steering."

Not Made to Last.

CUSTOMER: "That 'boys' tool chest' I bought of you was a fraud. The tools didn't last a week." Dealer: "Eh? You must have been using them yourself?" "Of course." "Those tools were intended for boys, not men. They would have lasted your boy a year at least." "I handled them more carefully than a boy would." "No doubt. But you used them a week. A boy would have tired of them in two days and a half."

Better than Medicine.

WILLIS: "Did the doctor do anything to hasten your recovery?" Wallace: "Oh, yes; he told me he was going to charge me a guinea a visit."

Well Marked!

"HIS attentions to you have been marked, have hey not?" said the young woman's experienced friend. "Oh, yes. He has never taken the price tag off any of his presents."

Couldn't Understand Much.

MARY: "I wonder why swells wear an eye-glass?" Jane: "Why, to block up one eye, so that they shall just see as much as they can understand at a time."

Force of Habit.

"TAPES can't get over his old haberdashery manner now that he is a house-builder." "What has he done?" "Sold a man a house the other day and asked him if he wanted it sent."

Like Her Hair.

EDWIN (tenderly touching her tresses): "Sweet one, let me be like this lovely hair." Angelina (tremulously): "What, dearest, what would you be?" Edwin (rapturously): "All your own."

Was He to Choose?

JONES' better half had presented him with twins. When nurse brought them into the room for inspection, the poor man was so bewildered at the multitudinous character of his happiness that he asked: "Am I to choose?"

It Was His Night.

A YOUNG man sent his girl a box of grapes one afternoon lately, and the next day a fellow met him in the street and said: "Those grapes were jolly good last night. Send some up every Wednesday evening; that's my night, you know."

Likely to Stay at Home.

MRS. WESTEND: "Good morning, Mr. Northend. I want to run in and see your wife. Is she at home?" Mr. Northend: "Yes; she'll be at home all day. When I left she was trying to make up her mind to go out and have a tooth extracted."

He Had His Life.

PRISONER (to Judge): "Make it as light as you can your lordship. I was the means of saving you from sustaining serious injury." Judge: "What do you mean?" Prisoner: "Why, some years ago I threw a boot at your lordship's head, but I missed it!"

Bruised with Ideas.

"YOUR husband is not looking well to-night, Mrs. Rhymer." "He isn't, and I'm not surprised at it." "No? Has he been overworking himself?" "It isn't that so much; it's his originality. Why that man is struck by so many original ideas that his mind must be one mass of bruises."

Wouldn't Let the Clothes Spoil.

"I'VE a great notion to go and jump into the river," said Mr. N. Peck at the end of a little domestic discussion, as he took his hat and started out. "You come back," said his wife. "If you intend any such trick as that, just march upstairs and put on your old clothes before you start."

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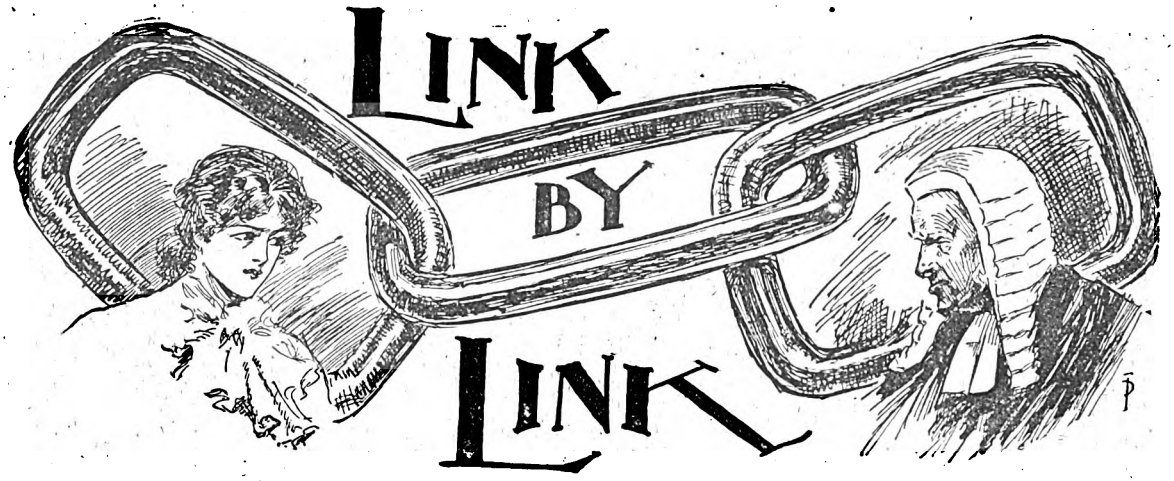

Principal Characters in the Story.

Gerald Mortimer: Of Moulstone Manor, in love with Nina Penhurst.

Mrs. Mortimer: Gerald's mother.

Dr. Branksome: Medical attendant at Moulstone asylum, a great friend of Gerald.

Anthony (or Felix) Cordelvin: An inmate of Moulstone asylum, who was found murdered.

Nina Penhurst: Governess at Moulstone Manor, a distant relative of Cordelvin.

Roderick Vanstone: Nina's guardian. He lives at Streatham, and has under his charge a man named Cordelvin, of weak intellect, whose estate, held in trust for Nina, he manages.

Stephen Vanstone: Roderick Vanstone's son.

The woman in the dark blue cloak: She was seen at Moulstone on the night of the murder, and has acted rather suspiciously since.

Stebbings and Burge: Men employed by Vanstone.

Inspector Trench: Of Scotland Yard, who is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin.

CHAPTER XV. (*continued.*)

The Face of a Dead Man.

For a few seconds the sudden appearance of the face over the shutters of the window had an effect that was well-nigh paralysing on Gerald Mortimer. For picture his impressions. The first was that he beheld in that face the re-vivified features of the dead man whom he himself had recently discovered among the ruins of Moulstone Castle; the next that in some strange, incomprehensible manner, the face had taken to itself the eyes of the woman in the blue cloak, whom, on two recent occasions, he had encountered under unusual circumstances. Considering all things, it was little wonder, then, that for a few moments his powers of reflection were, so to speak, stunned, and rendered incapable of convincing him that what he instinctively thought, could not possibly be.

Relief of the mental tension came when the lunatic outside on the ladder coolly put his elbow through the window-pane in order to get a better view.

"Ha! ha!" he murmured half to himself, but loud enough to enable Gerald Mortimer to hear distinctly, "a prisoner in the cells! The first case that will come before me as Lord Mayor. Ha! ha! ha!" He laughed a little hysterically, and then added gravely: "Prisoner, what have you to say for yourself? Are you guilty or not guilty? I'm the Chief Magistrate, you must know."

The sudden transition from hysterical laughter to a ludicrous gravity which the face had undergone, was sufficient to have sent Gerald off into a hearty fit of laughter, in spite of the awe-stricken feelings he had experienced just before. In his latest development of the incident, however, there broke through the mist of depression into which he had sunk, a glimmer of hope, and he restrained his mirth.

The whole explanation of the incident came upon him in one illuminating moment. The man outside was, of course, Anthony Cordelvin. His resemblance to Felix Cordelvin, although extraordinary, was explainable by their relationship. That need not be discussed now. The important point for him was that his questioner was mad, and was now labouring under the impression that he was a magistrate and that Gerald was a prisoner, intended to be brought up before him. In that circumstance lay the glimmer of hope which Gerald had at once perceived.

His association with Dr. Branksome at the asylum, added to his own common sense, had instructed him somewhat in the ways of the insane. Above everything else, he knew that the one thing to do was to humour a man labouring under a delusion, if one wished to keep him calm.

These thoughts all passed through his mind far quicker than it takes to write them. With the last words of the lunatic still in his ears, he made answer:

"Your worship, I am not guilty. Of course, I can't expect you to acquit me without a formal trial, but in respect to that I have a complaint to make against the gaolers."

The madman outside the window cocked his head on one side with comical dignity as he considered the words. The respectful manner, the mien of deference which the prisoner adopted, flattered his poor, deluded sense of his own magisterial importance. He puckered his brows and frowned down.

"Complaint, complaint?" he demanded, "and what is the nature of your complaint? I'll have no bad treatment; none at all. Eh?"

"I have to complain," responded Gerald, with the utmost gravity, "that your worship's gaolers have bound my hands. They have thus prevented me from preparing my defence. I can't write, you see."

The poor maniac once more cocked his head and considered. The words seemed reasonable to him, the complaint justifiable. He was about to tell the prisoner so when a trick of his demented mind prevented him following the discussion for a moment.

"Polar bear-skins!" he broke out suddenly; "I don't like Polar bear-skins! Think they're the thing? Vanstone's getting them for me, and says they're all right, but think Vanstone knows?"

Gerald Mortimer had not the faintest idea of the drift of these last remarks. But, as has been said, he was

acquainted with the ways of the insane, and promptly followed up the change of subject, with the idea of bringing it round to his own position again at the earliest moment.

"That's the question, your worship," he answered; "Polar bear-skins may be all very well, but they may *not*. You hit the right nail on the head when you ask, does Vanstone know? Vanstone's played *me* false. Why shouldn't he play *you* false, too?"

As the significance of these words sank into the mind of the madman, his erstwhile serene face underwent a remarkable change. His rolling eyes suddenly took unto themselves a look of suspicion, deepening into fierce distrust. What he would have replied it is impossible to say, for all without warning he moved, his head lowered, and, a moment later, disappeared from Gerald's view altogether.

The explanation of this sudden movement was that the madman had suddenly been apprised of the return of Burge, by hearing a distant footstep on the gravel. Imbued with the cunning which so frequently characterises men with distorted minds, Cordelvin hastily descended to the ground, and hurriedly replaced the ladder on the spot from which he had taken it.

Whether the returning Burge noticed any part of this manœuvre is not certain. Even if he had, and he had had the opportunity, it would not have been politic for him to make very much of the affair. To inform Mr. Vanstone of the lunatic's antics during his absence would be to accuse himself of negligence, and an explanation of his absence would be demanded.

As it was, the opportune appearance of Ned Stebbings precluded questions, and the incident passed undiscussed.

Stebbings brought a message for the instant return to the house of Mr. Cordelvin.

Hardly had be executed this message and seen it carried out than a ring came at the front door. It was the postman. There was only one letter; it was addressed to Roderick Vanstone—no "Esquire," no description of any kind; merely the name and address. Stebbings carried the letter to his master and withdrew.

Roderick Vanstone turned the letter over curiously for a moment. He did not recognise the handwriting, and the absence of all courtesy title made him lift his eyebrows. He tore the envelope open.

And then, whatever slight surprise there had been in his face before breaking the seal, was startlingly increased as he perused the letter. His features spasmodically drew together, the blood first rushing to them in a reddening torrent and then as quickly leaving them in a ghastly, twitching pallor.

Stephen Vanstone, as usual, idly sitting and smoking, saw the change.

"Hullo! what's up?" he inquired.

His father answered nothing. His eyes were fixed in vacancy on the floor, his mind was working to control its own agitation. The son repeated his question. Roderick Vanstone drew himself together, breathed heavily and quaveringly through his nostrils, and stepped, with half averted head, to where his son sat.

"Read that!" he said in low, hollow accents, and handed him the letter.

This is what it said:

> "Foxes are cunning, but foxes are often destroyed by the pursuing hounds. You are a fox, and there are watchful hounds who may destroy you—one, at any rate. Oh, what a fiend you are! The devil incarnate surely! You buried *it* deep, didn't you? Out of the sight of the world, didn't you? Yet are you sure? The fox may burrow—but what if the hound shall see him burrowing? Does that make you shiver? I think I see you. Be sure and treat *him* well, or the hound may unmuzzle itself and destroy the fox."

Stephen Vanstone read the enigmatical letter

TO THE STOUT OF BOTH SEXES

A Mistake, and How to Remedy It.

Many men and women, alarmed at the inexplicable encroachments of corpulency, are desirous of taking a stone or two off their weight. They have got heavy in their movements; they find they have more difficulty in breathing freely. They are reluctantly compelled to give up athletic exercises, and outdoor pastimes become more irksome than pleasurable. The women especially suffer the mortification of being no longer so attractive, and their favourite recreations—dancing, lawn tennis, etc.—can no longer be indulged in to any enjoyable extent. The mistake is that they let the mischief go too far, the fat accumulating, the figure spoiling, and the general health deteriorating. Happily for these imprudent ones these things are easily to be remedied by the famous "Russell" treatment. The remedy is pleasant, harmless, and sure. It is truly scientific, and very simple, and a reduction of from ½lb. to 2lb. per day is guaranteed. When normal proportions are reached the treatment may be discontinued. The "Russell" treatment is very fully described, and the recipe given in "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), by Mr. F. Cecil Russell, and any of our stout readers may obtain a copy of this wonderfully interesting book post free by sending three penny stamps to the author, at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—(Reprinted from *Myra's Journal.*)

THE EVILS DUE TO EXCESSIVE STOUTNESS

May be said to be proportionate to the extreme discomfort of that condition. The shortness of breath, the state of lassitude and weakness caused by abnormal stoutness, may, indeed, be symptomatic of fatty degeneration of the internal organs, and should receive prompt attention lest fatal results issue. If our stout friends should wish to be thoroughly enlightened on this vital matter, let them each obtain a copy of "Corpulency and the Cure," by Mr. F. Cecil Russell, and study it carefully. There is no phase of the subject of the causes and the cure of corpulency that our author does not touch upon in this remarkable book, and, indeed, Mr. Russell, as the originator of the famous curative system which bears his name, is well qualified to speak with authority. He gives conclusive evidence of the permanent benefits derived from his treatment. This is borne out by the extracts he gives of a good thousand of letters from grateful clients, who in many cases personally testify to an initial reduction of 2lbs. within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment, and to proportionate daily decrease until normal weight and size have been reached. Extracts from many newspapers, scientific and general, give further endorsement to Mr. Russell's successes. We warmly commend "Corpulency and the Cure" to the attention of the corpulent, who may obtain a free copy by writing to Mr. F. Cecil Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., not forgetting to enclose three penny stamps for postage under plain envelope.—(Reprinted from a recent issue of *Leach's Family Dressmaker.*)

through. His expression, while showing partial comprehension, betrayed considerable mystification.

"What does it mean?" he asked presently; "I don't rightly understand."

Roderick Vanstone, still engaged with his own reflections, gazed abstractedly on the carpet.

"Who can have written it?" he murmured half aloud, "who can have written it?"

"A madman, I should say!" remarked the other.

Roderick Vanstone looked up slowly; his face was still strangely pale.

"A madman!" he repeated, like one speaking from a parched throat, and shaking his head. "Not so mad as the letter would make him. Sane enough to have seen —and to remember."

"See—remember—what do you mean?"

"Why, isn't even that plain to you? Cannot you follow the references to 'burying *it* deep'? Don't you see that what we did was seen by somebody?"

"What we did—when?"

"That night—out there!" Roderick waved a hand at the window to indicate outside.

"What, in the grounds? That night when we buried the——?"

"Yes, yes. Of course it means that. But it means more—look what it says." The elder man seized the letter again and read: "You buried *it* deep? . . . Yet are you sure?" He read the words over two or three times, his lips framing them mutely, his tongue silent. Presently he again found utterance.

"I must make sure—do you hear, Stephen?" He was quite vehement now—"we must make sure."

The younger man looked as if he thought his father had taken leave of his senses.

"Sure of what?" he asked.

"Sure that the—what we buried in the grounds that night is there still."

Stephen leapt to his feet.

"Why, of course it is!" he replied, amazed. "What has put such tomfoolery into your head?"

The father gazed round with dilated eyes that had little expression in them, save that of fear.

"I have a presentiment," he observed in a low tone. "This letter has upset me. I want to make sure—I am going to make sure *to-night*."

It was strange, it was pitiable, too, in a sense, to see this unemotional, cold-blooded man stirred to his very core by this occurrence. His hands trembled, his lips twitched, and in the nervous, uncertain movements of his eyes there was plainly to be read that species of agitation which is born of fear.

For a long time he remained silent, alternately pacing the room with his hands clenched tightly together behind him, and then sitting down in his chair with his head reclining uneasily against his doubled-up fist. Always his brows were knit, leaving on his forehead two deep, brooding lines, while in his eyes there had now become fixed that set, unblinking look that betokens recent terror and a determination to remove the cause of it.

Roderick Vanstone was uneasy—more uneasy than he had been for many a day—but to-night, when others in the household had retired for the night, he, with his son, was to embark on that strange undertaking—the task of discovering whether what the letter had spoken of as *it* was still hidden from the gaze of the world; buried six feet down in the earth, in the midst of the shrubbery, over in the furthest corner of the grounds.

CHAPTER XVI.

The "Fox" and the "Hound."

The clock in a distant church had struck the hour of midnight; the lights in the old house on Streatham Hill had all been extinguished some little time. The white walls of the house stood grimly out under the pale light of the stars, like a great, sprawling, mis-shapen wraith. Outside the grounds lay in sombre darkness. Through the gaunt, bare trees the breeze passed in mournful sighs, which served but to emphasise and make more eerie the silence that otherwise brooded over the place.

Presently, from out a side door of the house, there issued two small, swinging specks of light—lanterns carried by two silent, stealthy figures. They were Roderick and Stephen Vanstone. Over the shoulder of the elder man could be faintly discerned a pickaxe, while under the disengaged arm of the younger appeared a shovel and a spade. Long ulsters covered the men's limbs, and slouch hats pulled over their eyes gave them the appearance of arch-conspirators bound on some mysterious mission.

In silence the two men walked, neither speaking as they stepped over the dew-laden turf, that chirped softly beneath their tread. They reached the beginning of the triangular shrubbery, and, skirting it, raised their lanterns and gazed keenly, as if for a landmark.

"Here's the place, isn't it?" asked Stephen Vanstone in a whisper, "these look like laurels."

The elder man lowered his lantern and, bending down, examined the wet leaves.

"Yes, this is right—twenty-five paces in now till we come to two small yew trees."

Silently once more the two moved. Nothing save the brush of their limbs and the implements they carried against the shrubs was to be heard. Mutely Roderick Vanstone was measuring his paces. He stopped at twenty-five.

"This is the place," he whispered, and said nothing more.

The lanterns were set upon the ground, and a few seconds later the first dull sound of the pick cutting through the mould was heard. Without a word or a rest, Roderick Vanstone plied the implement for five minutes. Then, having loosened the crust of the ground, both he and his son went at it with spade and shovel. It wasn't such hard work as it might have been; this very spot had been dug out by them but a little time before, and the rain and frost had had but little opportunity of hardening the mould. Speedily the hole grew deeper, the mound of earth thrown out bigger. They had penetrated over five feet down now, and any moment they might come upon the object of their search.

"It can't be much deeper," murmured Stephen, wiping his sweating face with his handkerchief; "our fool's task will soon be over now."

"If it's here!" replied his father; a slight shudder shook his frame as he uttered the words.

"If——" returned the other. "Why, of course it's here! Who would have taken the trouble to dig and take it up?"

His father did not reply. He only remembered the contents of the letter in his pocket, and shuddered again. Stephen was plying the spade now; only one at a time could work in the hole now that it was so deep.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, as suddenly the blade of the implement met with an unusually hard resistance, "that sounds like wood."

He cut and dug away the earth eagerly. The top of a long wooden box came to view—a box that might have been a doll's coffin. In a few seconds he had loosened the ground around it and was on his knees, tugging to get the box free.

"There," he said, as he lifted it, and, rising to his feet, handed it up to his father, "you see your fears were groundless. It's there, just as we left it. Look and see for yourself!"

Roderick Vanstone seized the box eagerly, bent down with it to the ground, and prised open the lid.

A mingled cry of horror and dismay escaped him. Stephen, who had leapt out of the hole by this time, asked him what was the matter.

For answer Roderick Vanstone pointed to the box.

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"Look!" was all he said.

The younger man knelt on one knee and examined the contents of the box. There was nothing save a couple of stones and a scrap of paper.

"*It* has gone!" he gasped. "Good Heavens! who can have taken it?"

Roderick Vanstone returned no answer. He was staring fixedly at the box, his limbs trembling as he knelt, his eyes having in them a look of wild despair. Stephen fumbled in a slightly bewildered fashion with the piece of paper. Something on it suddenly caught his eye.

"Writing!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Here's a written note!"

He placed the paper as close as he could to one of the lanterns and read the note. As he did so his hand shook and the paper rustled. The slight sound recalled his father to himself. He perceived the note, leant over, and snatched it desperately from his son's hand. Then he, too, read it. It was very short, and ran thus in a pencilled scrawl:

"The butcher's work is done, and cannot be undone. The work of the grave-digger, too, has been done. But I have undone that, as this note shall bear witness."

That was all. But it was sufficient to throw Roderick Vanstone into a still more violent paroxysm of fear. He looked up almost helplessly at his son.

"My worst fears are realised," was all he said.

"What does it all mean?" asked the other. Although agitated, he was, in relation to his father, comparatively calm.

"Heaven knows!" murmured Roderick. "It is all a strange, fearful business. But this note is in the same hand as the letter."

It had occurred to Stephen's imperfect recollection of the handwriting that this might be so, but now that his father's words confirmed his suspicion, it came with a shock as severe as if he had never dreamt of such a thing.

"Can it have been written by that doctor, that fellow Manisty, who performed the operation?" he asked feebly. A racking of his brain for a possible explanation had prompted the question.

Roderick Vanstone shook his head. "No, no!" he said. "There was no motive for his doing such a thing. Remember, by exposing us he would expose himself."

"It may be mere fancy," he went on after a pause, and with something like his old calmness now, "but do you know I think this is a woman's handwriting." He indicated the note as he spoke.

"A woman's! Why, what woman is there? What woman is there on the earth to take any interest in the business? There's only Nina Penhurst, and it isn't her writing; besides, she isn't the sort to do anything like this. There's no other woman. No, father, you're getting frightened, and your fears are unbalancing your common sense."

His father did not answer immediately. He was thinking hard, as could be seen by his twitching face.

"Stephen," he said presently, "what if I were to tell you that there is a woman living who might have written this note?"

The son's face took on it a look of surprise.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "What woman can there be?"

The elder man paused a moment; then he said calmly:

"Ruth Cordelvin!"

"Ruth Cordelvin? Who is she?"

"The sister of Felix Cordelvin."

"But you told me that he had only one sister, that she was half-demented, and that she lived in Australia."

"Yes; I told you that, but she may be in England now. She was, as I have learnt, always devoted to her brother, in her own peculiar, half-mad way, and although she allowed him to come to England through a quarrel, she may have followed him since."

"Oh, but it's absurd. Even supposing she is in

A Pretty Spring Blouse.

A sailor-shaped blouse in flannel, with collar of some rich material, makes a very dressy garment. If this is made of tucked muslin, inserted with lace, it sets off to great advantage a rosy and healthy complexion. Bile Beans for Biliousness provide the latter by removing all digestive troubles, and keeping the liver and kidneys in proper order. At the present season constipation, headache, lassitude, a desire to do nothing, and an all-round sense of depression and misery, trouble many girls and women. This is the sign which the system gives of its requirements. It needs toning up, and preparing for the coming summer. This work is done by Bile Beans more satisfactorily, speedily, and economically than by any other means; and in home remedies as well as in dress, ease, efficiency, and economy should always be considered.

A case where Bile Beans proved of exceptional value is given below:—Mr. L. George Webbley, of 103 Leam Terrace East, Leamington, suffered for a long period from skin eruptions, pimples indigestion, and biliousness. He was, however, cured by Bile Beans, and this is what he said to a *Leamington Advertiser* reporter:—"For three years I suffered from incessant attacks of indigestion, giving rise to various other ailments. The food I took seemed to do me no good. Painful headaches added to my suffering, and then also pimples and sores broke out on my face, which sometimes presented a dreadful spectacle.

There were red blotches everywhere; and, try as I would, there seemed to be no means at all of securing relief. After I had tried many advertised medicines in vain, I felt ready to despair. At last I saw Bile Beans for Biliousness advertised; and to see if they were superior to other medicines, I decided to give them a fair trial. With the first box I noticed an improvement in my condition. Apart from feeling more equal to my duties, I found that the sores on my face grew less and altered in colour, until one by one they disappeared altogether. I was also troubled no more with pains in my head.

I persevered with the use of the Beans, with the result, as you can see for yourself, that I have not now a single pimple left. My friends used to chaff me, saying my face was spotted all over. Now they are utterly astonished at the change in me. I also feel considerably improved in general health, and am no longer troubled by the headache and other symptoms of digestive trouble. I put my cure down entirely to Bile Beans."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled for indigestion, headache, eruptions, blood-impurities, pains in the back and chest, and other similar symptoms of stomach and liver disorder, palpitation, anæmia, all female ailments, constipation, piles, kidney complaints, loss of appetite, nausea and fulness after eating, nervous and general debility, colds, chill and rheumatism.

Obtainable of all chemists, or post free for price 1s. 1½d. or 2s. 9d., from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, E.C. (2s. 9d. box contains 3 times 1s. 1½d.). Bile Beans are sold only in sealed boxes; never loose.

SULPHOLINE LOTION.

For clearing the Skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

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England, how could she know anything of our business? Besides, no woman would have the pluck to come out here and dig——"

As he spoke he was suddenly interrupted. Through the shrubs which surrounded them, through the dark night which enveloped the grounds, a strange cry broke the stillness. It was not a scream, it was not a laugh, yet the sound had in it something of each; it was a long, drawn-out cry, semi-hysterical, mocking, weird. And it was the cry of a woman!

It smote upon the ears of the two men, father and son, and conveyed to their hearts a sensation as of frozen iron being laid upon them.

For some seconds they could do nothing save stand where they had stood ere any unexpected interruption had occurred. Fear—abject fear—fixed their eyes, and prevented them looking at one another.

And then once more the cry came—low, long, harsh, and maddening in its mockery. It was plain that it came from not very far away.

"Come, Stephen!" whispered Roderick Vanstone, recovering himself. "It sounded close by. There is somebody in the grounds. It may be she. Come, our lives may depend upon it."

The two men seized their lanterns and rushed out of the shrubbery. Turning to the right, in the direction whence the cry had come, they halted a moment. In that moment another sound reached their ears. It was the sound of rustling skirts hurrying away.

"The gate!" whispered Roderick hoarsely. "Make for the gate; we may catch her."

Despite the darkness, they rushed along at a good rate. Stephen, some little distance ahead, could descry the figure of a tall woman hurrying through the grass towards the wall-gate. He sprinted, and was up to her just as she reached it. She, hearing him close on her heels, placed herself with her back to the gate and veered round.

"Now, madam, what are you doing in these grounds?" Stephen demanded. "Don't you know you are trespassing, and that if we send for the police you——"

"The police, ha, ha, ha!" Once more she gave that strange creepy, mocking laugh. "You send for the police! No; you won't do that!"

"Look here, madam," Stephen began, advancing as he spoke. But he halted in his steps and speech, for in a moment the woman's hand had dived under her blue cloak and came out holding a six-chambered revolver.

"Stand back further!" she commanded. "Don't come near me or—Ah! here's the fox."

She half-turned as she spoke, and faced the elder Vanstone, who had now come up.

"Who are you, woman?" he began; "and what right have you in these grounds?"

She threw on him a mocking glance, her fiery eyes full of contempt.

"Don't you know who I am?" she demanded.

Even though he had never set eyes on her before, one look at her face, perceptible by the light of a lantern, was sufficient to tell him who she was. The likeness to Cordelvin was altogether remarkable, while the similarity of those fiery eyes was unmistakable. Nevertheless, he replied to her question evasively.

"How should I know you? I have never seen you before."

"Have you ever seen anyone like me?"

He hesitated a moment, feeling that for appearance's sake he ought to refuse to bandy words with the trespasser and threaten to give her into custody. But something forbade him to do these things. He glanced at her face again, and then replied:

"No, madam, I have never seen anyone like you before!"

"Liar!"

The one word came out sharply, laconically, bitingly; like a pistol shot. It stung the elder man to fury. He stepped towards her angrily, seemingly not noticing the revolver. But in an instant the woman's hand was under her cloak, and a moment later Roderick Vanstone reeled back, his hands to his smarting eyes. With a handful of sand, Ruth Cordelvin had practised on him the very trick which had momentarily incapacitated Gerald Mortimer a few days before. Then, ere Stephen Vanstone could recover from surprise at the helpless condition of his father, the woman in the blue cloak had pulled open the gate, slammed it to, locked it with a key drawn from her pocket, and was gone.

CHAPTER XVII.

Detective Trench Strikes "A Little Tiny Reef."

In the days following his return to London after his brief sojourn in the neighbourhood of Moulstone, Detective-inspector John Trench had by no means left unfulfilled his expressed intention of "making a few inquiries."

It is the habit in these days among the portrayers of fictional detectives, to endow their heroes with a private practice, transcendent genius, and a strong propensity for sneering at the "incapacity and blundering stupidity of Scotland Yard." As compared with the aforementioned transcendent geniuses, the individual members of the Criminal Investigation Department possibly do appear dull of understanding. They may not be such masters of the deductive process as to build up a theory of a crime around a hairpin, or swear positively, after an examination of a collar-stud accidently found, what the unknown owner of the collar-stud ate for breakfast on the previous Tuesday week. At the same time, when Scotland Yard really wants to find anything out it has a pretty consistent habit of finding it out, as many a cocksure criminal has discovered to his cost.

Consequently, it is not to be wondered at that the comparatively simple problem of the whereabouts of Nina Penhurst was quickly solved by Inspector Trench. Such a thing as that was a matter of mere police routine.

Now, as chance (or perhaps design) would have it, Inspector Trench deferred calling upon Miss Penhurst till that very evening following the afternoon of her meeting with Gerald Mortimer. A very few minutes' conversation informed the astute officer that, as regards her participation in the murder of the man discovered among the ruins at Moulstone, she had had no more to do with it than he had himself. Nevertheless, his visit was far from fruitless. His politely put, but pressing inquiries resulted in his becoming acquainted with Nina's history, the detailing of which necessarily involved the enumeration of her relatives. Thus it came to Inspector Trench's knowledge that the murdered man was related to her and also that another cousin of hers was living at Streatham Hill. Something, too, he learnt of the characters of Roderick and Stephen Vanstone. Very little it is true, for Nina was more than reluctant to discuss them, but sufficient to make one of his professionally suspicious habit of mind desire to learn more. Perhaps her very reluctance fed his curiosity.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the next afternoon found him, in the guise of a worthy mechanic on the look-out for a job, sauntering up Streatham Hill, and taking from the most advantageous spot he could find, a careful look at the house in which Roderick Vanstone resided.

Sauntering up hills and viewing houses is an occupation which, like many others, is apt to pall and make one tired. John Trench felt he wanted a rest, and since, for the most part, social economy has appointed that public-houses shall furnish the sole resting-place for the needy wayfarer, it is small matter for surprise that the officer should enter a hostelry. What is perhaps a matter for greater surprise is that he should choose the identical public-house resorted to by Mark Burge when-

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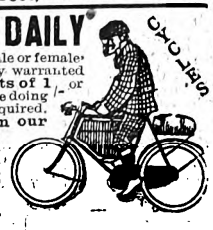

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ever, as has been explained was often the case, that worthy could snatch a few minutes from duty as a body-servant to Mr. Cordelvin.

As is not infrequently the case in suburban hostelries in the daytime, the bar was empty when John Trench entered.

Having ordered some refreshment and having exhausted with the landlord conversation on the weather, the war, and the slackness of trade, he adroitly managed to introduce the subject of "the old house just down the road."

"Ah, it's a queer old place—very old, I believe," remarked the landlord. "You don't often find a house so nigh to London with so much ground around it. Why, you could put up two or three streets in them grounds and fetch in a pot of money out of the rents."

"That's true," asserted Trench, "but I s'pose now the people as lives there would rather have the ground than the money, eh?"

"Maybe so," returned the landlord. "The house, as I understand, has been in the Cordelvin family for generations, long before London extended out to here, when it was all fields and woods."

"Ah! and do the same family live there now?" asked the detective innocently.

"Well, they do and they don't," the other answered, "if you understand me. Certainly Mr. Anthony Cordelvin lives there, but he's—"the landlord touched his head significantly—"not quite the thing here, and he's getting worse from all accounts. Mr. Vanstone looks after his money for him."

Someone entered the bar at the other end as he spoke, and the landlord moved up to serve him. As the detective caught sight of the newcomer he gave the slightest start, and then turned away and lost himself in contemplation, as if trying to remember something.

The man stayed about ten minutes, talking to the landlord the while, and then departed.

"There's a man as could tell you more about the old house we was a-talkin' of than I can," the landlord remarked, coming back to the officer. "That's Mr. Burge; he's coachman to Mr. Vanstone."

"Indeed; funny he should have dropped in just when we were talking about the house."

That was all John Trench said on the subject to the landlord.

But when he departed shortly afterwards and took a cab for Scotland Yard it was significant that he should at once take down a big album of photographs, which completely monopolised his attention for the next two hours, at the end of which time he suddenly started, rushed with the album to get a better view under a gas-jet, and then, with a note of suppressed triumph in his tone, murmured:

"Oh, oh! so you're Mr. Burge now, are you? Coachman to Mr. Cordelvin, are you? H'm, and what's your little game in becoming a respectable member of society, eh? What business have you got to do it? When I spotted you this afternoon I thought I remembered seeing a turned-down ear like yours before. You're Mr. Burge now, maybe, but a few years ago you were Jim Blake, alias 'Pompey,' alias 'Tricky Martin,' and one of the smartest warehouse thieves that ever bothered the Force. You may be all right now. I know nothing about you at present; but I should very much like to know something about the estimable gentleman who has taken you into his employ as coachman, and what sort of references he got with you.

"Jack, my boy," he went on talking to himself, as was his way, "it looks as if you may have struck a little tiny reef. Anyway, you'll have to run over to Streatham again to-night."

(To be continued.)

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[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

An Inattentive Husband.

I always like to hear from married correspondents in any little trouble they may have. For instance, "Frances P." often goes out with her husband, but he is most inattentive in little courtesies such as helping her with her jacket, or other necessary little services. If other men supply his deficiencies by being attentive to her he becomes very jealous, and there is trouble. How should she avoid this?

❦❦❦

Every man, "Frances," is at heart pleased if his wife is a social success. Even if this results in other men being too attentive to her, though he is jealous, there is a smothered compliment in the fact. Now you should trade on your husband's probable pride in you, and should put him through a rather drastic course.

❦❦❦

Instead of always appearing at your best when visiting, try a month or so of being at your worst. Upbraid him now and again about his inattentions, and fix as his punishment that so long as he neglects you, and objects to other men taking his place, you will either not visit with him, or if compelled to will not take any particular trouble in being unduly charming. This he will resent very much, and you can fix as your price of surrender that he should treat you in a proper way when out.

❦❦❦

Concerning Overtures.

"Musicus," like many another person, wants a sweetheart. Very suitable for the position is a young lady he knows, to whom he has been introduced. He wishes to pass pleasantly from the acquaintance, to the "spooning" stage, to use his own expression. How can he induce her, a modest, religious young lady, to come into line? Well, "Musicus," Spring is now here, and she is the best stage manager for love that I know. Choose a nice moonlight evening, and ask her if she would like a walk. Then talk romantically about nice things, and invite her to do the same. Then at a given moment apply the necessary gentle squeeze, and await results. If it "takes" at once, then all is well. If not, then apply twice or thrice the same treatment for successive moonlight nights. If this does not result in something, give it up, for she does not care for you.

❦❦❦

A Previous Love Affair.

Miss Maisie B. is engaged to a young man and is very fond of him, but he is not her first flame. Should she tell him of her former attachment, or should she keep it from him? I think it would be much better to gently break the news to him rather than allow it to leak out at some future date when he will gain the impression that she has been concealing something from him. I don't think there are many men who would resent such a confession.

❦❦❦

There is certainly a pretty general desire on the part of lovers to be "first in the field." It is not a very genuine sentiment, but rather a species of vanity. A man likes to think himself a Napoleon over something or other, be it only as victor over the most modest of damsels. But the idea has little more depth in it. Besides, is it not rather a compliment for him to realise that he has carried off the spoils, whereas a predecessor has failed to do so? I should advise "Maisie," in the course of conversation, to tell him that she has known what love is before, but never true and enduring love until she met her present sweetheart. The result gained from concealment is not worth the deception.

❦❦❦

Unreturned Love.

"Wilfred" (Southampton) likes but does not love a certain girl. She, for her part, loves but does not like him. She wishes him to walk with her always, but he prefers his male friends, thinking that once a week is all that the young lady ought to expect. How can he be friends with her, yet not compromised? She has six brothers and two sisters, to whom he has been introduced.

❦❦❦

You must be very careful indeed "Wilfred." Unless you really love her, it would be better to cease going out with her than to keep up the appearance of being fond of her, which must in the end cause a much wider breach than now. I think you should try and make it clear to her that you like her as a friend. As you know her relatives, the best way would be for you to see her at her house, rather than alone.

❦❦❦

When there, be as agreeable and nice as you can, not only to her but to her brothers and sisters as well. Cultivate the brothers particularly, and don't be averse to saying a nice thing occasionally to the two other sisters. This will make it clear that you are a social friend, while it will not compromise you so much as those walks alone with her. There is a way of expressing "like" which wants as much learning as that of showing "love," and I think the course suggested will convey the former to your satisfaction.

❦❦❦

A. J. (London, W.C.).—If you will write to me inclosing stamped addressed envelope I shall have much pleasure in sending you a copy of a letter I should advise you to hand to the young lady. I think the one you have written is much too formal.

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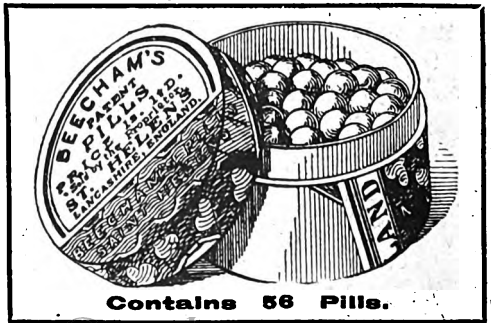

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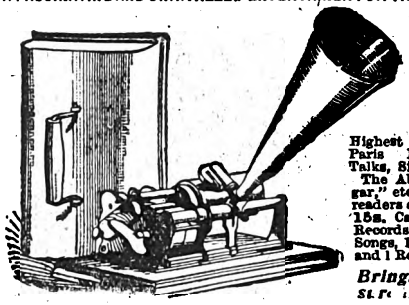

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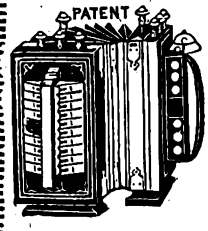

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By R. Norman Silver.

I.—THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE.

CHAPTER I.
"Found Here an Hour Ago."

"Good morning, sir," Inspector Hardwick is speaking from the Maple Street station. "Can you come round at once, sir? There is a body lying close to and we should be glad if you would see it before it is removed. Rather an unusual case; we don't know whether to suspect foul play or not."

The words stole faintly to the ear of the shirt-sleeved listener, who lounged at his ease near a conveniently-hung wall-telephone, holding in position, with a large, lean hand, the ebonite cylinder of the receiver. He himself was large and lean, yet obviously also as hard as the proverbial nails. Grey-eyed and red-haired, his big, jovial mouth was half hidden by a moustache fit for a cavalry officer, and his prominent even teeth were faultlessly white.

An expression of alert, almost eager interest lit up his features, and he stooped to the transmitter of the telephone to utter a brief acknowledgment of the summons the instrument had just delivered. His accent was unmistakably, rollickingly Irish. Save for the irrepressible intonation of the Green Isle, however, his English could scarcely have been more crisp and cultured.

"Sounds mysterious, inspector," he said. "I'll step across and investigate. Investigation is the forefinger of the long arm of the Law, eh, Inspector?"

With which pithy observation its maker hooked up the receiver of the instrument, put on a worn frock-coat, and pulled down a pair of soiled cuffs. The apartment in which he stood was the small inner parlour of a typical town surgery. Its furniture and fittings suggested that it had by no means been recently established; the walnut chairs and writing-table were scratched and old-fashioned, the carpet threadbare and discoloured, and though there was an air of superficial tidiness about the room and its contents, the flood of spring sunshine from the cracked plate-glass windows revealed, on the cornices and overmantel, the dust of years.

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Upon the writing-table itself, in a space cleared amid a litter of miscellaneous documents, loose insurance forms, and ripped-up envelopes addressed to "Lucius Shand, Esq., M.R.C.S." a spirit-lamp burnt under a Florence flask. Lucius Shand went over and extinguished the flame, thrusting a plug of cotton-wool into the narrow neck of the vessel above it.

This done, he took down from a rack attached to the door of his room a rough tweed ulster and a flat-crowned, hard felt hat, donned them, and traversed a dingy ante-chamber, with a dispensing-counter, behind which an assistant, in rusty black garments, was perusing the *Telegraph*.

Gaining the street beyond, Lucius Shand consulted his watch and strode off. It was close upon nine o'clock of a bright April forenoon—the rain which had fallen in the early morning, was fast disappearing from the flagged pavements.

As he hurried along the busy yet low-class thoroughfare upon which his surgery opened, his arms swinging, his keen, diminutive grey eyes ostensibly bent on the ground, he was the recipient of an almost endless series of salutes. The carter by his waggon, the idler at the corner, the constable on his beat or on point duty, the cabman from his box, each, in his own way, recognised Lucius Shand's presence. The jerk of an elbow, the flourish of a whip, the contact between two grimy fingers and a tattered cap, the palm smartly lifted to the brim of a regulation helmet—one or other marked at intervals the surgeon's progress.

Lucius Shand was in the heart of Division B—at once the richest and the poorest, the busiest and the drowsiest, the smallest and the most straggling of all the police divisions of a famous English mercantile town and seaport. And Lucius Shand, member of the Royal College of Surgeons, an Irishman, a gentleman, and a born criminologist, was divisional surgeon to Division B.

At the end of the short road down which he was hastening rose a tall, sooty-fronted building, with ample steps and a spacious, yet forbidding entrance. Its blank, curtainless

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sashes were like those of no other class of architecture; from roof to basement it bore upon it the stamp of the Criminal Law.

The surgeon mounted to the bare hallway and stalked into a department labelled "Inspector's Office." That person himself—a broad-shouldered, bull-throated figure in a soldierly braided uniform—came to meet his visitor. They exchanged greetings, then descended together to the level of the street and went up it, the surgeon's escort selecting the route.

While they walked, quickly yet deliberately, they chatted of the weather, of the war, of anything but the mission upon which they were bound. Despite the inspector's telephonic hint of unusual mystery, such errands, on the whole, were common enough to himself and Lucius Shand.

They were threading Division B, at the quarter where it helps to form the central portion of a town which is admittedly among the first half-dozen of English cities. Part of the Division borders the slowly-moving river on which the town in question is situated, and after including a section of the shipping and bonded warehouses, it runs inland across the commercial and banking locality, takes in a slice of the shopping district, and reaches the fringe of a rustic suburb. It was towards the lofty modern blocks of the "office" neighbourhood that the inspector was piloting his companion.

Here, by a stout hoarding between two huge nests of offices and sale-rooms, the former halted. A crowd was gathered at the wooden gates which gave admission to the inclosed space; three or four policemen kept the mob back. Saluted by their subordinates, the inspector and the surgeon passed through.

The hoarding shut off from the street a strip of building-ground, an older structure than the adjacent blocks having been removed by the house-breakers. The foundations of its projected successor had already burrowed deeply into the earth. High up against the side wall of one of the flanking buildings there hung in the air a spiral staircase that had been originally devised to allow of access, in the event of fire, to the lower and now destroyed block. Its final stair was fully a hundred feet above the thoroughfare without and below that again the builders had opened a gulf of another thirty feet. A small door in the wall gave upon it and the mass to which it clung dwarfed it to the texture of a spider's web.

Lucius Shand glanced up at this curious feature of the place as he followed the inspector down into the bowels of the earth, among girders and concrete piers and damp soil and liquid mud. Soon they came to a point, directly beneath the spiral staircase and a hundred and thirty feet lower than its terminating step, where a tarpaulin covered a patch of the soft clay between the incomplete foundations. A constable stood sentry by it, and, close to, a group of working men, masons, bricklayers, and navvies, whispered together.

At a sign from the inspector, the tarpaulin was removed, and the surgeon went forward to behold, lying stiffly with a dark, foreign-looking face upturned to the blue April sky, a handsome, well-dressed man, of more than medium height and stalwart proportions. In his scarf a diamond pin still glittered and on one swarthy finger gleamed a broad gold signet-ring. Not far off was a silk hat, dented and broken as if by a fall, yet conspicuously glossy and fashionable.

"Found here an hour ago, sir," said the inspector, referring to the lifeless form, "by some of the men coming on duty—the time-keeper sent for a constable immediately. Nothing has been touched, as far as we can see. The question is, how did he get into this odd corner of the world?"

Lucius Shand stooped to the rigid frame, touched the head with a gentle, expert hand, moved it a little, then displaced slightly—the action showing his great strength—the awkward unyielding body. There was a significant depression in the clay beneath it. He glanced up once more at the spiral staircase a hundred and thirty feet above, and from it again to the dead man. The police officers and the labourers were observing him respectfully.

Going down on one knee, the surgeon examined the body more carefully—the neck, the lips, the chest, the hands, for marks of violence. The fingers of the right hand were clenched; Lucius Shand peered into them, then, slowly, determinedly, forced them open.

Something fell from them on to the muddy soil—it was a crumpled flower, a white chrysanthemum with a short, thick, woody stem. And to the stem there clung a shred of lace—of delicate cream lace, such as a woman wears at her bosom.

CHAPTER II.
"I Tell You it is Impossible."

"Dead, my dear inspector; Mr. Rafael Mendoza—since that is his name—was as dead as Queen Anne hours before he landed where he was discovered this morning. True, in getting there he broke his back, fractured his skull and splintered half-a-dozen ribs. But had he been alive when those injuries happened some internal effusion of blood would have resulted. As it is, there is none."

Lucius Shand transferred a large, loosely-folded leather roll from the pocket of his ulster to that of his frock-coat, tapping it significantly as he did so.

"These are better detectives than any you have at Scotland Yard," he remarked, "they are the little steel bloodhounds of science that never get on false scents. Don't you wish you could say as much for yourself inspector?"

Inspector Hardwick scratched his head as he sat at his desk, turned a page or two of his report-book and gazed thoughtfully out of the bare window-pane at the quiet close of the April day.

"It's a queer case," he admitted; "the deceased is Mr. Mendoza, right enough, a well-to-do stockbroker, a Spaniard by birth and a bachelor. His offices are in Ocean Buildings, that's the big block on the left of where he was found."

"The one with the spiral fire-escape stairs," added the surgeon. The inspector nodded.

"Yes, sir," he said, "and, of course, we've made inquiries, going on the assumption, to smooth the way, that it is an affair of suicide. Indeed, pending the outcome of your examination, sir, we were inclined to consider it such. The depression in the ground suggested that the deceased had fallen vertically with much force, no doubt from the spiral staircase above. That your autopsy would appear to confirm, sir, though it disposes of any suicide theory."

"News for news," observed Lucius Shand. "May I ask if your investigations have revealed anything of moment—whether consistent or not with the hypothesis of suicide?"

"I cannot say they have, sir," was the answer. "Mr. Mendoza's personal affairs appear to be in a most satisfactory condition. As a matter of fact, he was left working alone in his private room last night by his confidential clerk, who went at eight o'clock. The hall-doors had been closed, as usual, at seven-thirty. At ten the caretaker finally locked up. That is all we know. Mr. Mendoza was formally identified this morning, but the papers on the body gave us sufficient of a clue before that."

"Humph!" retorted the surgeon, pushing his lean fingers through his red hair; "well, as the coroner may ask me to-morrow for an opinion as to the possible connection between that same spiral staircase and Mr. Mendoza's broken bones, perhaps it may save an adjournment if you run round to Ocean Buildings with me and let me overhaul the contrivance. I suppose you have already done so,"

"I have sir," said the inspector, "but without throwing any great light on the problem. The door at the head of the staircase was discovered open this morning. Every tenant on the upper floors of Ocean Buildings has a key, in the event of fire cutting off the lift well and central steps at any time; that in Mr. Mendoza's offices was missing. Neither was it on his person or in the lock of the fire-escape door. The whole business is certainly rummy."

With which confession the chief of the Maple Street station rose to put on his peaked and braided cap and act upon Lucius Shand's request. Five minutes later they were entering the massive granite hallway of Ocean Buildings. The commercial day was over, the lift attendant had gone, and a huge polished oak leaf of the outer doors had been bolted in position.

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"The caretaker lives at the top of the house," explained the surgeon's companion, "we shall find him somewhere about cleaning." And Lucius Shand was led promptly up the arched tiers of stone steps that surrounded the lift.

They had mounted almost to the loftiest floor when the sound of a bucket set down close to attracted Inspector Hardwick's attention, and he turned into a dusky avenue bordered by the entrances to various suites of offices. Not far off a man was filling a row of coal-scuttles from a wheeled bin.

"Hullo, Corrin," cried the inspector. "Here you are—I want you to let Doctor Shand have a look at that spiral fire-escape stair of yours; the one on the south wall."

The caretaker made a motion of assent and relinquished his shovel. He was a tall, grey-headed, grey-bearded fellow, in coarse vest and trousers and woollen shirt. But he carried himself with a martial uprightness, and, as he stalked off, guiding them in the indicated direction, his precise if loisurely gait was that of the old soldier.

Further along the wide passage was joined by a narrow sloping lobby, at whose extremity was visible a neatly furnished kitchen. Upon the threshold of this lobby—obviously the doorway to the caretaker's private quarters—was lounging a young man in the trim dark reefer suit and bowler hat of the provincial clerk.

Within the angle of the lobby itself stood a girlish figure, half child half woman. The main gleam of the dying spring day shone on her from some skylight above, and Lucius Shand saw that she had rippling brown tresses and eyes of a singularly sparkling, yet wistful blue. As they lingered there, lost to all but one another, the surgeon recognised in them yet another Romeo and Juliet, the two eternal representatives of romance. Romance that knows no distinctions of caste or fortune.

"Josie," said the caretaker, in a quiet, yet peremptory tone, "got me the keys of the fire-doors, there's a good lass."

The girlish countenance in the shadow of the lobby grew suddenly white; there was an instant's hesitation, and then the feminine rustle of skirts as the caretaker's order was obeyed.

The inspector nodded to the other partner in the recent *tête-à-tête*. "Mr. Mendoza's confidential clerk," he whispered to Lucius Shand, "evidently spoons on Corrin's pretty daughter. Josie Corrin is an admitted belle in these parts—several of our men on the beats around have been fairly crazy over her; it was quite a joke one time at the station. You're late to-night, Mr. Drury," he added aloud.

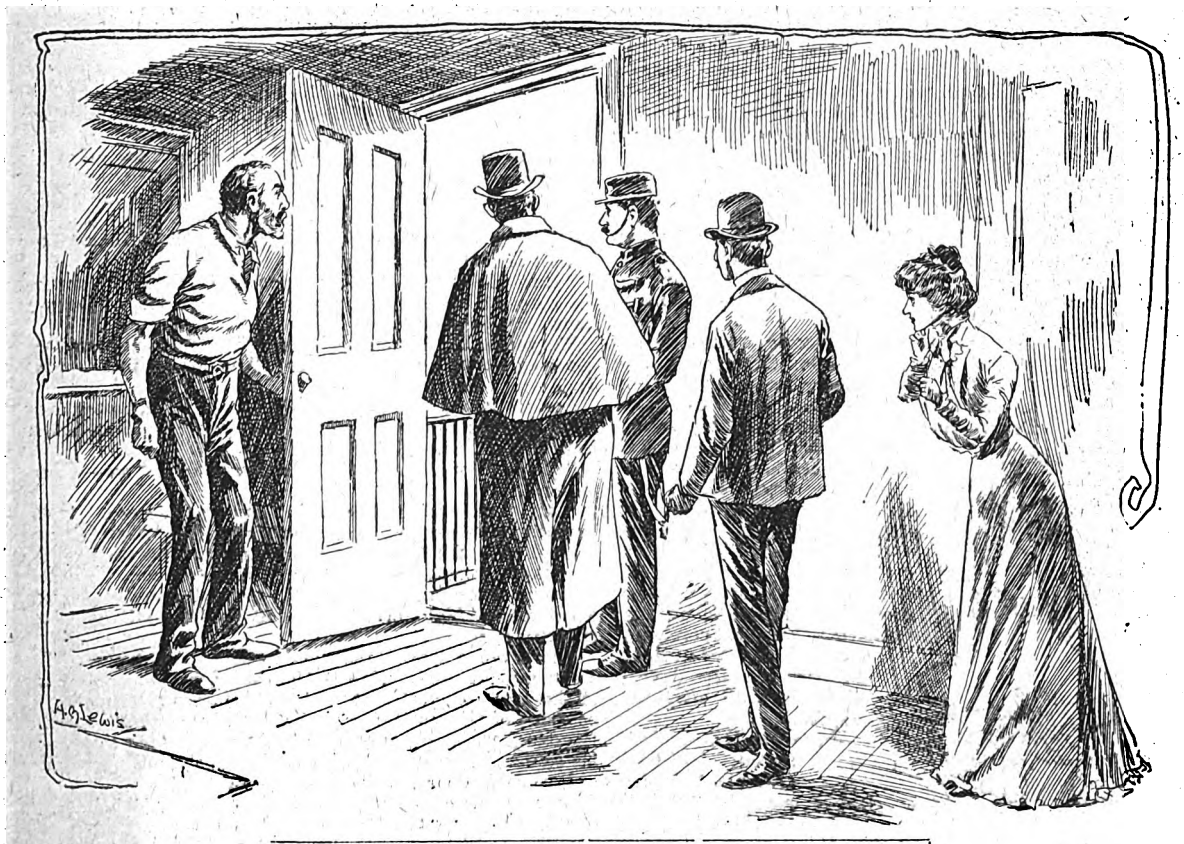
The person addressed coloured.

"We—we were talking over poor Mr. Mendoza's mysterious death," he said awkwardly; "it has upset everyone in the building, I believe."

"No doubt, no doubt," agreed the inspector. A footstep and the chime of metal against metal interrupted them. The girl was reappearing with a handful of heavy keys strung on a rusty chain. The caretaker reached into the lobby for them, selected one, and moving athwart the concrete flooring of the wide avenue in which he had been working, unlocked a low, deeply-set door in the main wall. It swung open and the evening air stole in—through the aperture was visible a patch of sky and a railed platform.

The surgeon and the inspector went towards it; the young clerk followed them. The girl, too, glided in the same direction, as if she were drawn thither against her will.

Lucius Shand stepped out on to the species of iron balcony



The girl, too, glided in the same direction, as if she were drawn thither against her will.

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and glanced down. A hundred and fifty feet below him was the principal thoroughfare of the B Division, thirty feet below that the excavated foundations of the structure that was to spring up and inclose the spiral stair and its flanking windows in the white-tiled wall whose beginning could just be seen beneath.

"It has been a sort of show place, lately, this," commented Inspector Hardwick, "no end of coming and going, they say; every tenant in the house has been opening it to their friends for weeks past—ever since the building next door was pulled down and the view cleared. That may have suggested——"

He paused. The caretaker was standing stiffly at ease beside them and a police-officer is habitually cautious. Unheeding the broken sentence, Lucius Shand walked slowly down the suspended spiral and halted on the last step but one.

For some moments he remained there, gazing into the void below him, the cool evening wind fanning his odd figure in its long ulster. His hands were in his pockets, he himself as unconcerned as if he were on solid ground instead of on the verge of an abyss. At last he turned and strolled back. When he entered the low doorway the young clerk accosted him.

"Dr. Shand," he said, "excuse me, but I know you, as do many people, by sight. I am Jack Drury, Mr. Mendoza's confidential clerk. Tell me, does all this mean that you think Mr. Mendoza committed suicide from that staircase? I tell you it is impossible—why, he had no key for this door. I had been showing a customer the staircase; it is quite the rage to stand on that bottom step and feel yourself hanging in the air—and I happened to pocket our key and carry it home. I only remembered the fact this afternoon. No, Dr. Shand, Mr. Mendoza did not commit suicide; he must have been murdered last night, as he went out to go home, and was thrown down there to be hidden. What if the door was open this morning? Someone who showed the staircase yesterday must have failed to secure it properly."

Lucius Shand surveyed the speaker—he was a frank, characteristic young Englishman and the surgeon perceived it.

"I am not at liberty," he replied gravely, "to express any opinion whatever on the subject. But I have no doubt that Inspector Hardwick will make a note of your statement."

He put a hand lightly on the other's shoulder—the surgeon's lean fingers seemed to hover about a large yellow chrysanthemum in Mr. Jack Drury's buttonhole.

"You are young to have been in Mr. Mendoza's confidence," he pursued; "no doubt you had risen in his employ—you may have been sincerely attached to him. If he should, as you say, have been murdered, you would be glad to see his murderers brought to justice?"

"I should indeed, doctor," was the ingenious response. Lucius Shand nodded a thoughtful assent, and apparently glancing neither to right nor left, bade Mr. Jack Drury good-evening and walked away, accompanied by the serene, if uncomprehending inspector.

In the street below, the divisional surgeon faced his official colleague. "Hardwick," he said, "I'm not a detective, but you've accepted a tip or two from me before now. Do it again—let a plain-clothes man keep that caretaker and his daughter in sight for the next few days—certainly until after the inquest."

Inspector Hardwick stared. "Michael Corrin!" he gasped, "and—and Josie! I'll be——oh, very well, Doctor, very well!"

CHAPTER III.
"It Has Cost Two Lives!"

"A pretty girl, a dainty, winsome little lass—and in love. Poor child, poor child!—who could have the heart to blame her for keeping her father's secret. And yet, a blow was struck; that makes it manslaughter—she is at least an accessory after the fact."

Lucius Shand was muttering to himself between meditative puffs of a heavy bull-dog briar. He sat before the hearth of his surgery parlour, his feet stretched to the smouldering embers, his chin on his chest. His lounging figure was almost invisible in the gloom of the unlighted apartment.

Barely an hour had elapsed by the round-faced clock over the mantel, since he had parted from Inspector Hardwick after their call at Ocean Buildings, and most of it the surgeon had spent in an armchair and meditation.

Suddenly he rose, lit a gas-bracket, and took up some sheets of memoranda—they were the notes of his post-mortem on the Spanish stockbroker, Rafael Mendoza.

"'Extensive bruise over left breast,'" he read, "'coincident in extent with a gunmetal cigarette case in deceased's upper vest pocket on same side. Made during life—extravasation of blood under the skin.'"

He turned a folio and perused another passage. "'Extensive mitral disease of heart—of long standing; death from collapse of valves in left cavity. Due possibly to a blow on the thorax or to excitement. Conceivably spontaneous."

He nodded his head gravely. "Poor child!" he murmured, "how terrified she must have been—how——"

The reflection was interrupted. His assistant had opened the door from the ante-chamber—someone darted unceremoniously into the room. It was the young fellow Lucius Shand had seen at Ocean Buildings—Mr. Jack Drury, the dead stockbroker's confidential clerk. He was white and blown.

"Come!—come at once, doctor!" the surgeon was desired gaspingly, "he—he has taken poison—strychnine, he told us—Mr. Corrin; you saw him this evening at Ocean Buildings you remember. He is delirious, raving. Josie—his daughter—is alone with him."

Lucius Shand snatched up his hat, forgot, for once, his almost inevitable ulster, darted into the dispensary, tipped on to some odd pieces of wrapping-paper portions of two hastily selected powders, screwed them up, thrust them into his pocket and hurried out of the surgery. Jack Drury kept abreast of him with difficulty.

"How did he get this—this supposed strychnine?" queried the surgeon, turning abruptly to his companion. "Do you know, Mr. Drury?"

The young clerk struggled for breath. "He—he must have gone out for it," was the answer; "he left me talking with Josie—with his daughter."

Lucius Shand was striding with rapid steps, faster than some men could have run. "You—you are interested in Miss Corrin?" he asked.

"Y—yes," stammered the other, pantingly, "we—we are engaged."

"Ah!" said the surgeon, and relapsed into silence. At the imposing entrance of Ocean Buildings, Mr. 'Jack' Drury pushed wide the unlatched doors and sped up towards the caretaker's rooms. Lucius Shand imitated him. Nearing the topmost landing they heard the sound of contending voices, one fierce and high, one subdued and pleading, with an accent of terror in it.

The surgeon gained the next corridor at a bound. The caretaker, his shirt gaping at the throat, his waistcoat flung off, his face drenched with a clammy dew, was struggling to pass out of the small door which led to the spiral staircase. His daughter, blanched and horrified, was seeking to prevent his egress. As the surgeon came within sight the caretaker unlocked the door and dragged it open.

"I will, Josie, I will," screamed the victor, "he's there, I tell you—he's got on to the bottom step somehow and he'll come up. The police doctor suspects—I mustn't let that infernal Spanish Jew take to haunting the place; I should be found out. Leave go, I say."

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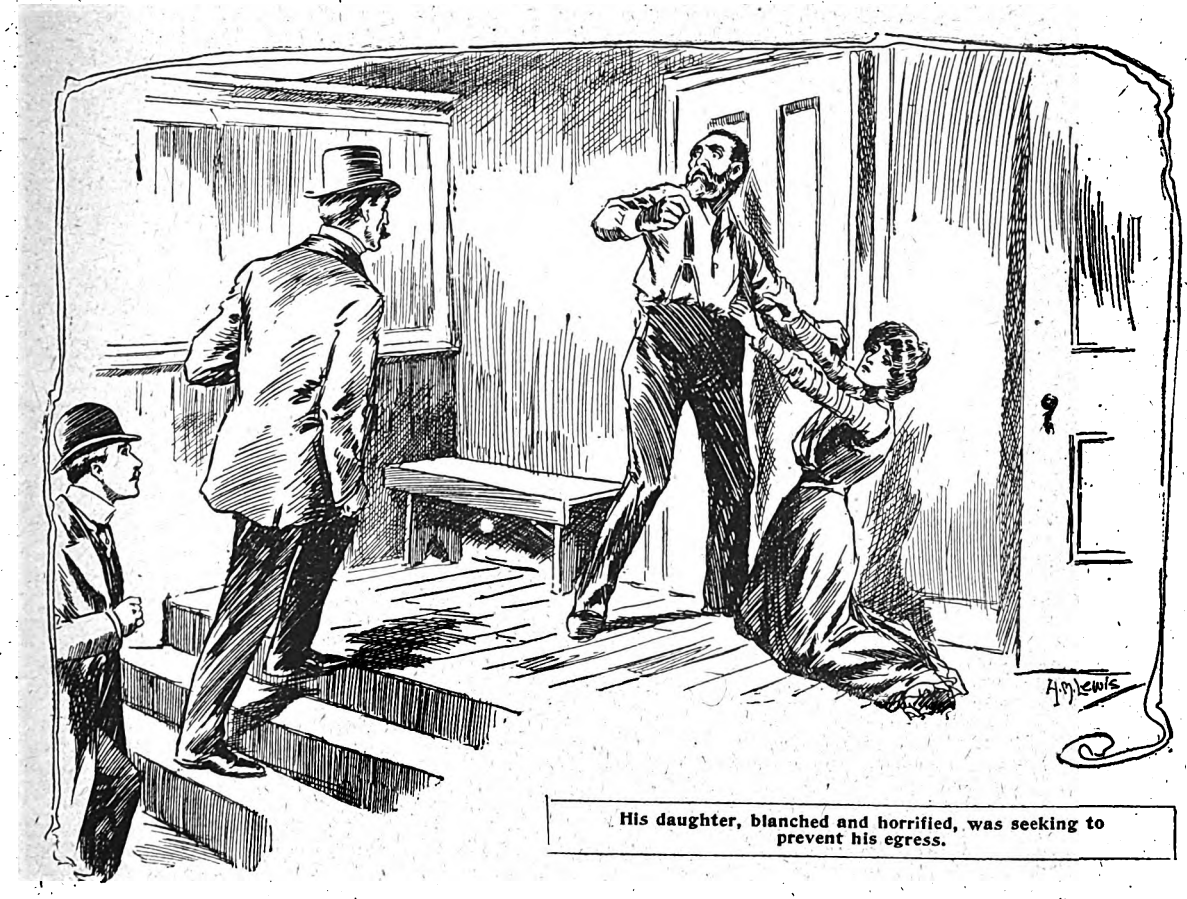

His daughter, blanched and horrified, was seeking to prevent his egress.

He wrenched himself free, as Lucius Shand and Jack Drury reached the singular exit, and disappeared down the spiral stair. The surgeon rushed after him, a light from a great window in the sheer side of the building falling on them both as they went.

Maddened by his internal agony, and delirious from the effects of the poisonous drug he had swallowed, Michael Corrin scrambled to the bottom of the hanging stair, knelt down, and began to hammer at the last of the metal steps.

"Get off," he shrieked, "loose your hands, do you hear, you Jew. I'm innocent—I never meant to do it. You should have let her be when she told you. Let go, I say—you made less objection this morning."

Lucius Shand had glided stealthily from step to step and ventured at length to clutch at the caretaker's shirt. But the latter sprang up with an ear-splitting howl, reeled, and pitched off into the black void about them. The divisional surgeon was left alone on the quivering iron structure.

There was a scream from the head of the stair, and hastily collecting himself, Lucius Shand hurried back. Josie Corrin had fainted in her lover's arms. The surgeon looked at the girl's drawn, pale features and drooping eyelids. Then he lifted the lace that hung at her bosom. It was delicate and creamy, and in it there was a tiny irregular hole.

"Poor child!" he said. "Mr. Drury, she is fatherless—nothing that lives could have survived that fall, strychnine or no strychnine. You gave her a flower yesterday, Mr. Drury—a white Japanese crysanthemum; a pretty flower, you are partial to crysanthemums, I see. That flower has cost two lives. Yet she is guiltless of either. You are the sort of man to stand by her and I am glad of it. There will be a nine days' wonder but as your wife she will soon forget it all. Even the Law will not blame her for keeping her father's secret."

The young clerk folded, instinctively, the unconscious girl in his arms. "What do you mean?" he faltered, dazed by this accumulation of mystery and tragedy.

Lucius Shand pointed to the torn lace. "Last night," said the surgeon, "Mr. Mendoza lingered to flirt with your betrothed as he went home. He snatched the flower from her breast, she cried out, her father came, and, being an old soldier and choleric, struck him a blow in the chest. Mendoza dropped, dead—his heart was diseased. Horrified, Corrin took time to consider methods of concealing his technical manslaughter—to which, unfortunately, he attached too much importance. Ultimately, he flung the body from the foot of the spiral stair in the small hours of this morning. That route he has himself followed to his death. There will be two inquests to-morrow instead of one. If you know any kindly woman in the neighbourhood, arrange for her to stay with that poor innocent there. I will get you up a plain-clothes constable from the station to act as messenger."

He went down to the telephone in the hall and had himself put into communication with Inspector Hardwick.

"Corrin has just committed suicide," he said, "I was sent for ten minutes ago and am at Ocean Buildings. I was right about Mendoza. You might send me a man or two round."

In his office at the station the listening inspector well-nigh dropped the receiver.

"By the living Jingo!" he muttered, but we weren't wrong when we called him 'The Brains of the Force'!"

[Next week: "The Woman at the Little White House."]

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MR. BOWSER'S TRIBULATIONS.

The Effect a Summer Drink like his Mother used to Make had on him.

The Bowsers had just finished dinner the other evening when a cart delivered a barrel at the basement door, and in reply to Mrs. Bowser's queries Mr. Bowser explained:

"That's all right. I had a man down the street make me a cask of summer drink after my mother's old recipe."

"What sort of summer drink?"

"Well, it isn't exactly root beer or ginger ale, but something between the two. It's to purify the blood and act as a tonic during hot weather. Mother used to make it by the barrel, and doctors would send twenty miles to get a gallon for a patient. I happened to mention it to this man, and he knew just how to make it. It's a regular elixir, and I propose to drink about a gallon a day."

"I should say such stuff would be more apt to hurt than help you," observed Mrs. Bowser after awhile.

"Stuff! Stuff! Would you call champagne stuff?" he demanded. "It's a very funny thing that I can't get something fresh into this house without your finding fault. Any wife but you could see that I am all run down to a shadow and that I need a tonic of some sort. Because I haven't sat down and groaned and complained you think nothing is the matter with me."

"Is anything the matter with you?"

"Oh, no, of course not. I simply have a torpid liver, a case of dyspepsia, giddiness, roaring in the ears, flying pains, and half a dozen other things. Some men would have been in bed a month ago, but because I persist in keeping up you can't see but what I have the health of an ox."

"And this summer drink will cure you?"

"Certainly. That's what I got it for. I'm not paying twelve shillings for a cask of pond water. I hope you will have the good sense to take it at the same time, as I notice a dulness in your eyes, and a languid air about your movements."

Mr. Bowser said no more, and ten minutes later he rolled the cask down the cellar and proceeded to tap it. The taste was all he anticipated. Indeed, he smacked his lips over it and said to himself that it was a superior article to his mother's famous brew. It had a certain twang to it which hers lacked, and this twang so captivated his palate that he imbibed a pint or more before going upstairs.

He carried another pint with him, expecting Mrs. Bowser to drink half of it, but as she declined even to taste it he sat down to his paper and sipped at intervals until the jug was empty. About ten minutes after the last of the summer drink had disappeared Mrs. Bowser was suddenly startled by a "Ha! ha! ha!" and she looked up to find Mr. Bowser gazing at her with a smile all over his face.

"What on earth is the matter with you?"

"Nothing—nothing 't all," he replied, with another laugh. "I was just thinking how nice you are. Yes, Mrs. Bowser, you are an awfully nice woman. 'Scuse me, will you, while I taste that summer drink and see if it's all right?"

"Is anything wrong with you?" she asked as she looked hard at him.

"Nothing, my dear, 'cept that my dyspepsia is better. Yes, my dear, you are a nice woman—awfully nice. So's the cat—awfully nice cat."

He got up and went down for some more of the elixir, and when he returned at the end of ten minutes his face was flushed, his eyes sparkled, and he sat down in a reckless way and chuckled and said:

"Yesh, Mishus Bowser, you are an awfully nice woman. I'm glad I married you, I am."

"You—you have been drinking!" she gasped as she sternly regarded him.

"Me been zhrinking! Ha, ha, ha! Why, Mishus Bowser, how funny you talk! I just been zhrinking shome of zhat summer drink; zhat's all. My mozzer used to make zhrink like zhat, you know. Poor mozzer!"

"Look here, Mr. Bowser, the man who prepared that cask for you must have put whisky or brandy in it. You are as good as drunk. What a shame! Let me get you to bed at once."

Mr. Bowser was getting drunk in the recognised way. He had begun with the "funny feeling." Her words took him out of that and into the next scale, and, assuming a look of great dignity, he demanded:

"Woman, be careful what you shay! How dare you even hint zhat I am intox-toxicated?"

"But you must be," she persisted.

"Never, woman—never! When you shee Misher Bowser the worse for zhrink, you will shee the end of the world. Take back your vile impu-pu-tation!"

"It is probably only a slight giddiness," she said as she schemed to get him upstairs.

"Zhat's all—just giddiness. I'm a giddy old thing, you shee. No, I won't come to bed. I want to sit up and shee the old year out."

Mrs. Bowser realised that she could do nothing until he had changed his mind, and she sat down to wait. The cat came in from the back yard, and took a long squint at Mr. Bowser, and as she saw how things were she purred a few bars of the air of "Dad's Got 'Em Again!" and took up a position on the sofa to await further developments. Mr. Bowser's next scale was that of the sorrowful.

All at once it flashed upon him that his mother was no more, and with tears running down his cheeks he wailed out:

"Mishus Bowser, how can you sit zhere like zhat when you know my poor mozzer is dead?"

She had no answer to make, and, breaking into sobs, he continued:

"Poor, poor mozzer! I was her only shon. When I think zhat she is dead and gone——"

For five minutes Mr. Bowser gave way to his grief. When he raised his head, he had passed on to the next step, and, drying his eyes, he flourished his arm and uttered a laugh and exclaimed:

"Whoopee! Mishus Bowser, I'm going to show you zhat I can make the best speech you ever heard."

"For mercy's sake be quiet, or the cook will hear you!" she cautioned.

"What do we care for the cook? You shay I can't make a speech, but I shay I can! I shay I can! I shay——"

"Yes, yes, I know."

"I can make a speech shame as Joseph Chamberlain. You just lemme git started once, and I'll bring down the house. Mishus Bowser——"

"Come, dear, it's time to go to bed," she interrupted.

The words sent him along to the last stage. A feeling of ugly obstinacy came over him, and, pounding on the table with his fist, he shouted:

"Mishus Bowser, you can't trick me!"

"No one is trying to trick you, dear."

"No, madam, you can't do it! You want to get me upstairs and assassinate me, but you can't do it! I know you. You've tried to kill me fourteen different times, but you can't do it. I'm going to sit here for three years, I am."

She made no reply, and after looking about in a vacant way for a minute he burst out with:

"No, I ain't either. I'm going down to the club."

He rose up and lurched out into the hall, and she followed and coaxed and intreated, but as she got hold of his hat he turned on her with:

"Woman, shay no more to me! Zhis is not a happy home, and I'm going down to the club. Leggo my arm!"

As he fumbled at the door some one came up the steps, As he opened it he collided with a man. They grappled in the collision, swayed to and fro for a moment, and then Mr. Bowser fell backwards into the hall and dragged the man with him. There was a mix-up and yells of surprise, and then the stranger broke loose, and without waiting to pick up his hat he went down the steps and over the fence like a midnight shadow.

Mrs. Bowser closed the door and looked down upon the fallen. He was snoring where he fell. Descending to the cellar, she knocked the spigot out of the summer drink cask, told the cook what she would have for breakfast, and as she passed upstairs for the night she turned down the gas everywhere and left the slumberer to the gentle darkness of peaceful sleep.

M. Quad.

[Next Week: Mr. Bowser becomes a Transmigrationist.]

THE WOOING OF MISS EMILY.

How a Valentine Won a Lover.

She had loved him long, and now she was no longer young.

But, she carried with her the perennial spring which abides in the hearts of such faithful lovers.

Age was as the ripple in the brook. It passed and left no trace on her heart. She still wore her hair in little curls, as of the fashion decades back. The curls were thinner, but the bright brown hair had dropped so gradually she did not notice it. She believed that a woman should be won. That an unsought glance was a stab at true maidenhood, and while the bloom was on her delicate cheek she had been so shy with these same fleeting looks that she had repelled many a suitor.

Now she was fifty, with a heart still fluttering, and a mind slightly inclined to sentimentalise.

She had a scrap book, whose sacred pages were visited only by her gentle eye, in which she had copied, in a faint, cramped hand lines of her own composing: An "Ode to November," "A Maiden's Love Song," a "Sonnet to a Withered Rose," and verses appropriate to the seasons.

She lived in the smallest house in the village, and the cleanest, and in the summer embowered herself in trailing vines and sweet-scented blossoms.

She wore a large sun-bonnet, in which her small face could be faintly seen, like a dim moon immersed in cloud.

As I have said, she loved him, and why should I say more of him?

He might have been to you a commonplace man with a retiring disposition.

Words further you would not have wasted.

That he had been unfortunate in some ways might have been added. In youth he was tied to the bedside of a fond, selfish, invalid mother, who besought him often in her paroxysms of pain never to leave her: "It won't be for long, John, and I can't live without ye."

He had waited with the patience that characterised his life in after years, and she had lived, as the weak often do, to the allotted age of man, and had died, leaving him middle-aged, with two maiden sisters who had grown into the thought o him as part and parcel of their lives—tyrannising over him in the gentle but all-powerful way in which frail femininity balances the scales with her oft-time tyrant, man, ruling severely the gentler spirits among them. "John must do this," and "John certainly ought to weed that flower-plot to-day," and "John will take the plate of cakes over to old Miss Tomkins." John, still feeling mentally his knickerbockers and turn-down collars of years gone by, went at their bidding.

Once he had gently hinted that he had thought, when younger, of bringing a wife home to the old place. "It'd be company for ye," he had insinuated. Celia, the oldest, had settled it emphatically. "Well, John, 'there is no fool like an old fool.' What do you want to get married for? You're too old; and who d'ye ever court? Besides, what's to be done with us?"

But Ellen, the younger and more tender-hearted, had retired behind her spotless apron and cried quietly.

The last argument was the most powerful. Big as he was, he had a child's heart. A woman's tears won the severest battle.

Besides, how did he know she loved him? She had never looked at him. But for years there had lingered a vision with his dreams. He could see it yet.

A long dewy lane. At the farthest end a slender figure, with down-cast eyes, coming down the narrow path.

She had golden-brown curls at each side of her small head, and the colour in her cheeks was like the heart of the blush-rose by his mother's gate. She had a bouquet in her hand, which he supposed she was carrying to old Mrs. Pemberton, across the far meadow.

He, big ungainly fellow, was almost inclined to turn back as he saw her approaching.

She was most inclined to fly as she saw his broad shoulders growing more distinct as the distance grew shorter.

But neither fled, and they met under the widest tree in the lane.

"How d'ye do, Miss Emily?" he faltered, wondering why he couldn't tell her how sweet she looked, standing there in the clear light in her blue dress, her big straw hat hanging by its strings on her neck.

"How do ye do Mr. John?" she had timidly responded, and even then felt that womanliness pointed to her moving on,

"Pleasant day," was his next original venture, snatching at the time-worn subject as a pretext for a longer look at her pretty cheek's curve. And as he saw her departing: "What pretty flowers. Oh, give me one!" he ejaculated, in true lover's despair.

She had lifted those sweet eyes to his, then, with the loveliest

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look he had ever seen, had handed him the homely forget-me-not, and they had separated.

She, with keen shame at her "avowal," as her prim little heart had named her surprising act, for did not forget-me-not mean "true love"? How could she have done it? How could she, how could she! And that night she had written a poem, which was in a high degree plaintive, commencing:

"Oh, maiden, steel that heart of thine," and ending: "For if he love thee, thee he'll tell," over which she shed many a ponsive tear.

He, of course, manlike, with the primitive simplicity which belongs only to that period and that mode of life, saw in the flower no hidden meaning. With his equally shy nature, he saw instead a rough, unscented blossom, given by a hand which pulled it from its place beside a fragrant rose, the colour of her cheeks.

What could have betokened more plainly her feelings?

He, too, had passed a sleepless night. He had made no "poetry," but had put aside in the long hours what might have been the poetry of his life.

* * * * *

Now they were elderly, but they did not feel it.

Life flowed so gently in those quiet country villages that days and weeks glided by, only noted by the dropping out of some aged landmark, or by a new arrival from the land of Nowhere.

Still Miss Emily jotted down her bits of poetry, and still John "tended" the farm, and went to the market town for provisions.

If he had passed the house while she worked among her flowers she kept the huge bonnet over her face, or rose primly and withdrew to the kitchen, for had she not once given him a glimpse of her heart?—the privacy of "that sacred dwelling-place of love," as she termed it, should not again be disclosed.

He naturally attributed her action to dislike or indifference, and the gulf seemed widening with years.

It was now approaching Valentine's day.

Miss Emily kept accurate notes of all births, deaths, anniversaries, and holidays in her long-time friend and companion, the scrap-book.

As was natural with a maiden of life-long attachment, St. Valentine's day carried for her a peculiar charm. She had written various valentines, the high flush not leaving her cheek until she heard them go, puff! up the kitchen chimney; but on this particular day she had been more than usually poetical. She had, as if moved by a compelling power outside her own, carefully written some verses with the title "To my Valentine."

After it was laboriously copied she had a sudden revulsion of feeling. What was it all for? Here she had thought "beautiful thoughts," and written them down year after year, with no one to tell her they were good; and then her fancy turned towards what might have been. If there could have been a familiar figure sitting in the arm-chair opposite! Here she picked up an envelope, lying with her writing materials, and carefully addressed it.

"For one moment I will see that name on paper," she exclaimed, with a fierce little motion. "What if this were going to him," and she, blushing nervously, folded the little billet carefully, and placed it in the envelope.

Some starved cord in her heart twanged mournfully.

"I'll leave it there a little while," she murmured, as she rose to place the immaculate china on her small table, for she mustn't forget she was to have her little Sunday-school scholar, Lucretia, to tea.

Her table was a more poetical expression of herself than her lame poetry. Her spotless linen, her thin china, her crusty loaf of fruit cake of a recipe handed down by her grandmother, the golden butter—all formed an appetising picture to the little tow-headed girl, in whose honour the feast was spread.

One incident only marked this visit with interest.

When Miss Emily was neatly clearing up the table after Lucretia's small stomach had been satisfied, the demure little maiden with the smooth hair—as she sat with her copper-toed shoes close together, and her small eyes roving—noticed a narrow, white envelope lying addressed on the slim-legged writing table. Being the eldest of a large family, and, in consequence, never without a strong feeling of responsibility, she mumured to herself: "Now, Miss Emily has forgotten to post her letter. I'll surprise her, and post it myself." So saying, she slipped it in the capacious pocket of her Sunday gown, and smiled with complacent shrewdness at the thought of Miss Emily's surprise when she discovered her "thoughtfulness.

And Miss Emily was surprised.

A passer-by in the small hours of the morning—if there ever were passers-by at that hour in this quiet country village—might have seen a spark of light like an eerie and restless spirit shining here and there in the little house. It was Miss Emily and her tallow dip searching for the lost valentine, which she "must have mislaid," she kept repeating in her precise fashion.

* * * * *

It was the day after St. Valentine's, and the winter sun shone frostily through the bespangled panes of John White's chamber window. It beheld a man in all the throes of unaccustomed letter writing. A "Ready Letter Writer" lay open before him, and he alternated between bursts of natural feeling and recourse to the "R. L. W." He emerged at midday, exhausted and triumphant.

THE LETTER.

Esteemed Friend,—It is with feelings of profound emotion that I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well, hoping you are the same.

I got your valentine. It was too long a-coming. I've allers loved ye and allers shall.

I ain't much on letter writing, but may I come and see you and explain things.

Yours till death,

John White.

There were those in the village that laughed at this antiquated love affair, but two hearts were contented.

It was "the new mune wi' the auld mune in her airms."

Walter Parsons.

She Rode One with Four Legs.

The Major (rocking Nelly on his knee, for Aunt Mary's sake): "I suppose this is what you like, Nelly?" Nelly: "Yes, it's very nice; but I rode on a real donkey yesterday—I mean with four legs you know."

That Would Give Him a Shock.

Doctor: "If your husband's hiccoughs don't stop very soon, madame, he'll be a dead man. There is only one thing to be done; he must be startled out of them. Can you suggest any way?" Anxious Wife (thoughtfully): "I might tell him that I had decided not to order that new silk dress."

Experience Teaches.

He: "My dear, I believe I shall sell a piece off our frontage." She: "Why, Charlie? You said when you bought the place you would never sell an inch of that lovely lawn, even if we were starving." He: "My love, at that time I had never had any experience in running a lawn mower."

Hadn't Heard She Was Dead.

Lady (to applicant for position as domestic): "My goodness! This reference is signed by Mrs. Upton!" Applicant: "Yis, mum; she signed it herself, mum, after I'd been there a week, mum." "But Mrs. Upton has been dead for twenty years." "Is that so? Wull, wull! It's wan place afther another Oi've been gettin' on that char-act-ter fur twenty-foive years, an' Oi never heard l efore that the poor leddy was dead. Heaven rest her sowl!"

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Closing date, Tuesday, April 22nd.

SHORT STORIES

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH TOWNS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.
Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each set describing the name of a town of over 5,000 inhabitants in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those places you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and pin it to the other three lists, and then post all in an envelope marked "Towns," to the Editor, "Short Stories," Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive by first post on Tuesday, April 22nd.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

LAST LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:
To exclude monarch..... Barking.

31. Artful secrecy; avaunt! ..... 31 .....
32. Peas that come early ..... 32 .....
33. Separate a country ..... 33 .....
34. Auction ..... 34 .....
35. To feed on ..... 35 .....
36. To beat small ..... 36 .....
37. To scatter ..... 37 .....
38. Wide steps ..... 38 .....
39. A small brook..... 39 .....
40. To cringe in a battle ..... 40 .....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

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ANOTHER HUGE COMPETITION WILL BEGIN NEXT WEEK

HARLEY BOYD'S TRIUMPH.

Tracking a Thief to Win a Girl.

A swarthy featured, middle-aged man entered the offices of Dwight and Ramsey's detective agency in London, and was greeted warmly by the junior member of the firm, John Ramsey.

The visitor was small in stature, but his lithe figure, quick, nervous tread and piercing black eyes, easily portrayed him to be a man not to be trifled with. He was the head of the British Secret Service Department.

"I want a man, Ramsey, who is practically unknown as a detective. We have tried to unearth this diamond smuggling business with the regulars long enough. They are too well known, and I have decided to try an outsider."

Ramsey thought a moment and then replied:

"We have just the man you want. He is a young chap, only been with us some six months, but long-headed, shrewd, brave, and yet so cautious and modest in his general bearing that he might easily be mistaken for a young preacher. He is in the outer office—I will call him."

In response to the summons, a tall young man of some twenty-five years entered the room.

After the introduction the stranger said:

"Mr. Boyd, I want you to take a trip to the Continent. Can you be ready to start to-morrow?"

"Easily, sir," was the reply.

"Well and good. A party by the name of Dexter Slye has made a good many trips across the water in the interests of someone whom we are anxious to discover. We are positive that Slye purchases immense quantities of diamonds on the other side and has them with him when he boards ship. We have never been able to discover a single article of contraband among his possessions.

"Slye will take passage on the same ship with you. Don't lose sight of him until he gets back to Dover, and move Heaven and earth to discover his method of operating. If you win there is a big reward and fame awaiting you. If you fail you will be only one of many," said the chief kindly.

Necessary arrangements were then discussed and settled, and Boyd left the office to call upon Miss Violet Haverly.

Colonel Haverly was a widower with one child, Violet, and lived in a beautiful house in Kensington.

Dexter Slye and the man who was shadowing him became fast friends before the passage was half over. Boyd had told him that he was simply going abroad for a little recreation.

"I didn't know but what you were another 'tec in disguise," said Slye. "If you are, I will tell you now that I buy and sell diamonds. How, when and where I dispose of them is my business."

Slye was well aware of the identity of his companion, but he kept it to himself. They visited Paris, Amsterdam, and Berlin and various other places in company, by Slye's invitation, and the smuggler purchased stones to the amount of at least £20,000, news of which was regularly cabled by Boyd.

Boyd wined and dined Slye sumptuously with a faint hope that he would let slip a word that might help to unravel the mystery, but it proved futile. Wine failed to unloosen his tongue and Boyd was in despair. They came back home together by the same steamer, and Slye showed Boyd the glittering fortune stowed snugly in a small black handbag.

"I will pay the charges on all that they find," he had said laughingly to Boyd.

The voyage was nearly ended and the steamer was passing a fleet of small fishermen, when Boyd saw his man do something that looked suspicious. Slye was leaning far over the rail and after casting a hasty look around to see if he were observed, he let something drop into the sea. Hastening aft, Boyd saw a huge white life preserver floating on the water. It was one of the circular kind blown up with air.

As it dropped quickly astern he rushed to the captain. He had already shown his credentials to the captain, who at his request slowed up his vessel and allowed a boat to be lowered with an officer and four men to go with him. Slye begged to be allowed to go, but he was refused.

As the boat was rowed swiftly towards the floating white object as it tumbled and rolled in the choppy sea a small fishing steamer was seen coming towards them at full speed. Then something flashed across Boyd's mind. A few moments would tell him the truth.

He promised the crew five pounds apiece if they reached the object first, and they bent to the oars with a cheer. The little steamer was too far away, and with his heart almost in his throat Boyd leant far over the boat's bow and grasped the life preserver.

"Here, that belongs to me!" shouted a man from the deck of the little steamer a minute later, as she came rushing along up to where Boyd's boat was lying still and motionless except for rising and falling with the sea. "A friend of mine threw it over for me. You will see it addressed to Captain Rufus Blanchard, Grimsby, steamer *Wild Pigeon*," he continued.

But Boyd did not hesitate. With his jackknife he ripped the preserver open and found a narrow piece of inch rubber hose running through the centre. Another rip and slash and the diamonds were brought to light.

"All right, Captain Blanchard, I will come aboard," said Boyd gleefully.

When he climbed over the rail he motioned for the boat's crew to follow, which they did with alacrity. Only three men, hard-looking characters, were found beside the captain on the *Wild Pigeon's* deck, and Boyd placed them all under arrest, and ordered the steamer headed for the cross-channel vessel, with the boat in tow astern.

"Mister, come down inter the cabin a minnit, will you?" said Captain Blanchard to the detective, as they were steaming along towards the larger vessel. "I've got suthin' I wanter say to ye."

Boyd followed him down into the cosy cabin.

"I didn't intend to git in any trouble, mister, jest pickin' up that thing and kerryin' it to Grimsby," began the captain.

"Well, it looks something like it, sir," replied Boyd.

"I own a commandin' interest in this little fishin' steamer and have got a family. That feller paid me pretty well and said I wouldn't get inter any trouble, so I did it," whined the captain.

"Who was it that hired you?" asked Boyd.

"A feller by the name of Slye. I was to lay off here waiting for the ship that he would cross in—you see he allus sent me a telegram to Dover before he started. Then I jest picked the belt up, put it in a box after I got to Grimsby, and sent it by special messenger to London to Slye under the name of John Johnson, 34 Kilmer Street."

"Supposing the ship came along after dark, how would you work it then?" asked Boyd.

"Well, we'd sight the ship's lights, give one long blast and two short ones ourselves, to let Slye know we was near, and lay to. He had a time electric machine that would burn a small, bright light after about half an hour, that was fixed on an iron standard on top of the preserver. Then he ballasted the thing underneath to keep it upright.

"If 'twas a thick fog, he had an electric whistle attachment that would blow steady half an hour after it was throwed overboard. You see he never used to go over only in the summer time, so we never struck any big storms and never lost a package. He is a pretty smart feller, that Slye," and the captain wiped the sweat from his forehead as he sat back in his chair with a sigh.

"I will see that you are not very severely dealt with, as you have done what you can to repair the damage," said Boyd. "But we shall want you in London for a witness."

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Slye was nearly crazy aboard the cross-channel boat as he saw that he had made one voyage too many. As the fishing steamer arrived alongside, Boyd made arrangements with the captain to allow his fourth officer and the boat's crew to take charge of the *Wild Pigeon* to London, and he beckoned to Slye, who, shivering and pale as a ghost, followed him to his cabin.

"Well, Slye, it's all up, it seems," said Boyd, taking a chair and motioning to the smuggler to follow suit.

"Confound you, yes," growled Slye, as he glowered at the detective with looks that would have killed him had it been possible. "I was a fool not to have waited until you were below," he muttered.

"It would have been more to your advantage," said Boyd, with a smile. "Now, who is in this, Slye?"

"How much is it worth to know?" was the answer.

"If you make a clean breast of it, it may lighten the term of sentence," said Boyd.

"I have not been convicted yet," said Slye grimly. "The prison was never built that will see me."

"What do you mean?" asked Boyd, slightly startled.

"I will tell you this much," said Slye, ignoring the question. "The man who has received the greatest benefit is a party you are well acquainted with." And he whispered a name to Boyd that brought him clean out of his chair. "He didn't know the whys, nor whens, nor wherefores, but he has backed the business for three years. No man living, with the exception of Captain Blanchard and myself, knew how the trick was done, and he didn't know what was in the life preserver. He judged that it was something valuable, of course."

Finally he rose and went on deck without saying a word. Boyd followed him. The diamonds had been placed in the ship's strong-room for security. The ship was just off the pier head as Boyd reached the deck.

Then there came a startling episode. Slye jumped to the rail, and before any one could stop him, although a crowd was watching him, he pulled a revolver, pressed it against his breast, fired and fell into the sea.

Mr. Ramsey and the chief of the Secret Service met Boyd on his arrival, and were dumfounded at the tale which they heard. It smacked of the miraculous, but a sight of the diamonds proved it to be no fairy story.

The chief was jubilant and lauded Boyd until that young man felt that he had at last assumed gigantic proportions among those of his profession. The £2,000 reward offered by the Government would also be his, and Boyd felt that he was well qualified in financial standing to take a wife.

He said nothing to his superiors about the name whispered to him by Slye—he was saving that for a future occasion if need be.

The old captain gave his testimony when the authorities confiscated the diamonds and he was allowed to go free.

The day after his arrival Boyd called upon Miss Violet Haverly at her home. Her father met him at the door and he was evidently greatly agitated about something. He was about to slam the door in the detective's face when something he saw glistening in the deep blue eyes facing him caused him to pause.

"I gave you to understand, sir, the last time I saw you, that your presence in my house was not desired nor would be tolerated," he said in a passionate voice.

"I would like to see you in your library, Colonel Haverly. Or, rather, perhaps, that you would like to see me there," said Boyd smoothly, but with a something in his voice and manner that the bluff colonel dared not disobey.

"Very well, sir. You may come in, but make your stay as brief as possible. My daughter is in her room," he replied.

"I will see your daughter later," said Boyd. "My present business is with you."

"Now, sir, what is your business with me?" said Colonel Haverly pompously.

"I desire to wed your daughter, sir. I came here to ask your consent—partly," said Boyd.

"If that is your business, I will ask you to get outside this house instantly," he said, when he could catch his breath sufficiently to talk. "Refuse, and I will have the footman throw you out."

"I think not, sir. Sit down, Colonel Haverly," said Boyd. "I said that I came here to get your consent to marry Violet. We love each other. I am not a pauper, although not rich, and I have an honourable profession," said Boyd, looking the rich man squarely in the eyes.

"Go on," growled the Colonel.

"Have I your consent?" said Boyd.

"Never!"

"I believe you were acquainted with a party known as Dexter Slye?"

"What are my acquaintances to you, sir?"

"You are evidently aware that he committed suicide off Dover pier two days ago," said Boyd.

"I am."

"I discovered his method of operating," said Boyd quietly.

"What's that you say?" and Colonel Haverly was white as a sheet. Then he forced a laugh. "But why should that interest me?" he concluded.

"Slye's secrets did not die with him," said Boyd imperturbably. "He was too poor a man to have the capital to buy £20,000 worth of diamonds."

The Colonel dropped heavily into a chair.

"Shall I ring for Violet and tell her that we have your consent?" said Boyd, watching his man narrowly.

"Did Slye's secrets die with him?"

"In case I marry your daughter, sir," said Boyd. "The Government is amply repaid, or I should look at the matter differently."

"You may ring, Mr. Boyd," said the Colonel hoarsely.

George A. Baker.

5/- a Day for Life!

Do you realise what this means?

To the average man who has to work for his living—be he professional man or workman—nothing is so uncertain as business. Few of those who read these remarks can say without hesitation that they will, this time next year, be receiving as much money as they are now getting.

A sudden accident that deprives him of the use of a leg or an arm, or of eyesight, may prevent a man from continuing his work for weeks or for months, or maybe forever.

How grand, therefore, would it be to know that for certain the sum of five shillings would reach him every day of his life, and keep him, if not in luxury, at all events, in comfort.

This munificent prize is offered in a competition of which full particulars will be announced shortly. Meanwhile, all you have to do is to endeavour to realise in your own mind what five shillings a day would really mean to you.

Are you a Single Girl?

It will keep you in comfort for the rest of your life—should you never marry.

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It will if judiciously saved, buy your trousseau and help to furnish your new home.

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It will keep you in new hats and costumes and enable you to enjoy many little luxuries for which you may have long yearned. If you are, however, of a saving disposition, you can put by for the little ones.

Are you a Married Man?

It will pay your rent, rates, taxes, coal, servant, and keep you in clothes into the bargain. Not for one year only, but for the rest of your life.

THINK OF IT!

5s. a day for Life!

Circumstances Alter Cases.

A Tale of Two Rivals.

"Ha! ha! ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" asked Dick Grahame of his friend Harry Drew.

"Ha! ha! ha!" was the only reply for fully half a minute. "Excuse me old chap, I know it seems rude, but circumstances alter cases, and you must forgive me in this *case*."

"What is your case?" asked Dick in a slightly heated manner. He felt that the laugh was more pointed at him than he at first supposed.

"Now then old chap, don't lose your topknot, I can't help being amused, because——"

"Amused at what? If you would explain I could join in the fun," Dick said sarcastically.

The two friends were sitting in Dick's rooms—where they had often sat before—but lately an unaccountable stand-offishness and want of frankness had crept in between them, so that the nature of the laugh jarred somewhat on Dick's nerves.

"'Hang it all, man!" exclaimed Harry Drew, "you do like to catch a fellow on the sharp side. I will tell you what I was laughing at, and it will in all likelihood satisfy you and settle the case. Our mutual friend, Miss Ruy—well, she has fooled us all."

"Fooled us all? What do you mean?" asked Dick hotly.

"What I mean is this," said the other coolly, "that she is going to get married." Dick started—"We all thought, more or less, you the more, that we were in the running. Now she has suddenly made up her mind to marry a *man* as she says. Of course——"

"'But listen one moment," said Dick, "how does this affect me, what have I got to do with the matter?"

The other looked at Dick in affected surprise.

"Why, I thought you were as sweet on her as could be, and excuse me, I was thinking in that direction myself, but stood off when I thought you were first."

"Me?"

"Yes, you, but anyhow I met her the other day when she told me of her coming marriage, and in my surprise I blurted out 'What will Dick Grahame say when he hears of it, he will get a surprise.' She stiffened her chin and replied in her haughtiest manner, 'Mr. Grahame was nothing to me, and I am surprised that he has the unbecoming audacity to think so,' and she sailed away and left me standing like an ass. You know, she has never been the same since she had that money left her. Now, I was laughing a few minutes ago at the thought of nearly all our fellows tumbling over each other, so to speak—and you among them—to get into the good graces of Miss Ruy, and now she coolly walks off with a stranger."

"I suppose she can marry whom she likes," replied Dick stiffly. "There is one thing, Miss Ruy could not have married us all, so it is probably the best thing to do to marry outside the circle and make us all alike."

"But you? I thought you might have felt it most."

"Is that why you laughed so loudly?" asked Dick, who did not like the tone of the other's voice. "I may tell you Miss Ruy was nothing to me, and I am surprised at your thinking so."

A gleam of satisfaction came into Drew's face, as he thought to himself, "that's number one settled." And hastily taking his leave he chuckled to himself as he walked along the street.

After this the two friends seldom or never met, they seemed to think by common consent that it was the most desirable plan. When they did meet, Miss Ruy's name was never mentioned, greatly to the relief of both, which however arose from different causes. Dick Grahame did not know that Harry Drew was as often in Miss Ruy's company as he could find excuse for. While Grahame, who would not for worlds look near her, after the callous manner in which she had spoken of him, and though he told himself it was no interest of his, nevertheless he found himself scanning the papers for news of her marriage, and was not a little surprised as time passed on to neither see nor hear any word of the same, and he would not submit to try and make inquiries, as, of course, that would show that he was interested in the matter.

Meanwhile, Harry Drew was trying to make headway in his attentions to Miss Ruy, but up to the present he could not tell himself he had met with much success. One evening he called at her house, and during ordinary conversation she suddenly said, "Do you ever see Mr. Grahame, Mr. Drew?, I have not seen or heard of him for a long time now. I wonder how he is getting along, do you know, I often think about him."

This was not very encouraging for Drew, but he smothered his thoughts and replied, "I have not seen him lately. The fact is, we are scarcely on the same friendly terms as we used to be, and we are, I am afraid, gradually drifting apart."

"I am sorry to hear that," replied Miss Ruy, "Dick was such a nice, jolly fellow, and I always thought you were bosom friends or 'chums'—isn't that the word?"

"Yes. But one even has to give up one's chum when reason dictates he should," replied Drew, with a martyr's smile overspreading his face, "and certain things happened to cause me to think that such must be the case."

"You never told me this before," replied Miss Ruy, with a look of profound astonishment and decided regret. "What was the cause of your disagreement? Do you know I often thought Dick"—Dick again while he was only Mr. Drew—"stayed away when he heard those absurd rumours about my supposed marriage; have you ever found out what or who gave rise to them?"

"I have," replied Mr. Drew in a serious tone and a look of sympathy, "and that is just what applies to the question you first asked me."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that, now you have given me a chance to speak, I will honestly tell you the whole facts as given to me, even at the risk of gaining your displeasure."

"Is it about Dick—I mean Mr. Grahame?"

"It is about Mr. Grahame, as you now call him, and if you will listen to me I will tell you the cause of our parting, so to speak."

"Yes," and Miss Ruy settled herself as if prepared to hear something unpleasant.

"One night," began Mr. Drew, "I was in the rooms of Mr. Grahame, and in the middle of the conversation, he suddenly burst out laughing. On my inquiring the reason for the hilarity, he said, 'Haven't you heard the news?' 'No,' I replied, 'what news?' 'Haven't you heard that Miss Ruy is getting married?' and he laughed again. I felt hurt at his manner, and said that I thought there was little to laugh at. In fact, I was half under the impression that he liked you, and when I hinted as much, he laughed the louder and said that was my own fault, that you were certainly after him, but he could not help laughing at the escape he had had."

"Stop one moment, Mr. Drew. Am I to understand that I was discussed in that manner?"

"I am only telling you what occurred, and when I, taken aback as I was at his conduct, asked him a certain question the exact words of his reply were, 'Miss Ruy was never anything

to me.' I was so disgusted that I immediately left his rooms and have not been there since."

Miss Ruy was now red and white by turns, and seemed ready to faint, but recovering hastily, she said, "Excuse me Mr. Drew, I wish you good-night, and pray do not refer to this subject again on any account—good-night."

When Mr. Drew found himself in the street that night there was not much of the chuckle left in him, but instead he felt very uncomfortable, and a dread feeling as of something going to happen.

He had no decided fault to find with the way Miss Ruy had received him, yet he could not deny to himself that he had not as yet made any impression, unless the uneasy feeling he had, that if so, it was on the wrong side.

"Good Heavens!" and the sweat broke over him, "did that look in her eyes, when she said 'good-night' not seem to imply that he was a scoundrel and a liar?"

What if she suspected his story to be false, and they came together and compared notes! What would they think of him? Another thing that now troubled him was, when he thought of the size of Dick's fist and strength of his arm, he already in his thoughts saw the fire in Dick's eye, and heard the resounding whacks which would be his only share of the plot.

The next time he called, Miss Ruy at first refused to see him, but as he intimated that he had something of great import to tell her, she at last consented, but the manner in which she entered the room was enough to convince the most assured that the case was hopeless, and he was painfully aware of the fact. Yet he could not help putting it to the test. "I have taken the liberty, Miss Ruy, of calling on you to ask you a most important question. I—that is—why do you look at me like that?" as Miss Ruy stared at him in a manner that completely unnerved him. "You know, you must know," he began to say, "that I have shown towards you a——"

"Stop! No more of this, Mr. Drew! I know what you would like to be able to say, and complete the nice little scheme you have had on hand."

"Scheme? Really, Miss——"

"I said scheme. You know very well that you have laid a diabolical plot to injure Mr. Grahame, for a reason best known to yourself."

"It was because I loved you. I could not help myself. You know 'all is fair in love and war.' I——"

"I do not think we will discuss the matter further, you have at least admitted as much, and confirmed my suspicions."

But Grahame did say you were nothing to him, and I thought I was quite justified in taking his place."

"Thanks very much," she replied, smiling bitterly. "Your interest in my affairs has overrun your discretion. I will wish you good-day, and, remember, for the last time."

Once more Mr. Harry Drew found himself in the street, using language to himself that would have sounded very rude even through a telephone, and a dog which happened to look up at him as though wondering what was wrong, paid the penalty of his inquisitiveness by getting a sound rap with an unbrella which sent it away apparently trying to howl the "Marseillaise."

A few weeks after, Dick Grahame had a visit from a friend of his whom he had not seen for a long time. This friend carried about with him the delightful and highly polished name of Septimus Brown. Yet he was a "jolly fellow."

"I say, Grahame," he cried, as he shook Dick heartily by the hand, "where the dickens have you got to this last month or two. I thought you had given us the slip entirely."

"I have been taking things quietly," answered Dick, as he returned Brown's warm greeting. "I have not been up to much of late, and wish to lie low for a while."

"Well, well, my friend, if you persevere sufficiently long you may lie lower than you want to. There is nothing kills a man quicker than having only his thoughts and his shadow for company. Now, what I want you to do is this. I am going down to my place at Brighton next week, and on Thursday I am going to give an ice cream show, otherwise a garden party, and you *must* be there, and bring your racquet with you. I can promise you tennis, a refreshment tent and other sports, to rub the cobwebs off you. It is settled I suppose that you accept——"

Dick slowly shook his head.

"Rubbish man! sheer rubbish! I say you must come!"

"Why must?"

"Because, if you don't, you run a chance of regretting it once—and that will be all the days of your life."

"I can't see where the joke comes in, Brown," replied Dick, half smiling at the other's manner. "The fact is, I am fairly out of these affairs and mean to be for some time. I have lost all——"

"Lost fiddlesticks!" cried Brown. "I'll expect you on Thursday without fail, do you hear—without fail."

But Dick only shook his head and said, "I am sorry I will have to disappoint you."

"By-the-bye," said Brown suddenly, "have you seen Harry Drew lately?"

"No!"

"Then you haven't heard the news."

"What news?" asked Dick, becoming interested in spite of himself.

"I'll tell you," replied Brown, putting on as innocent a look as he could muster, "you know what an infernal gossip I always was—and am. Are you aware that Drew has been after Miss Ruy, and ——"

"Then she is not married?"

"Married? No!" said the other, "but if all goes right I have no doubt she soon will be. As I was saying, Harry Drew proposed to Miss Ruy, and——"

"And what?"

"Got kicked for his pains," coolly replied Brown, puffing at his cigar. "But sit down, old man,"—as Dick had risen to his feet in the excitement of the moment, "you seem to take an interest in this affair," and he looked at Dick with lamb-like innocence. "Do you know Miss Ruy?"

"Yes," replied Dick, "but it is some time back."

"Oh, yes, of course," replied Brown. "What has got hold of my senses, yes, yes, what an ass I am. Why, only the other day I met Miss Ruy and she was asking after you."

"For *me?*"

"Yes, that makes me all the more stupid, as I nearly forgot to tell you."

"What did she say?" inquired Dick, with an interest and eagerness that caused his companion to smile inwardly, though he still wore the innocent look.

"She merely said she had not seen you for a long time, and as I could only say the same, there was not much information to be got out of either of us, so I just thought I would run up and see how you were."

"I am very glad to see you, Brown," as a wonderful change came over Dick. "I think I will come out a bit more than I've been doing of late. Anyway, I'll accept your kind invitation to Brighton."

"Right you are, my boy, I knew you had some sense left. There is one thing I promise you, and that is, if you do not enjoy yourself, I will never ask you again."

On leaving Dick's room Septimus Brown took the liberty of calling on Miss Ruy, and intimating that he specially desired her company at a garden party at his place, which invitation being promptly accepted, Septimus Brown took his leave and looked up to the sky with a self-satisfied smile.

The great day arrived, and so did the guests, and the gathering proved a great success in every way.

"How are you, Dick, old man," as Brown and he met. "I want you to make a set on the lawn. I will get the other partners together."

Presently Dick beheld Septimus Brown approaching with—"Good heavens! Miss Ruy——" and before he had time to think they were upon him.

"You have met Miss Ruy before"—coolly—"I'll leave you two to make your own arrangements, while I hunt up the rest," and rushing off in pretended haste, Mr. Septimus Brown was lost to view.

The silence was awful. Dick tried to speak, but his brain

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could not, or would not assist him to form a sentence. Miss Ruy stood looking at the grass as though it were the first time she had seen such a thing in her life. At last Dick in sheer desperation said, "You here, Miss Ruy?"

"Yes, and you are here?"

This edifying conversation was stopped by the heaven-sent voice of Mr. Brown, asking them if they were ready.

The play on this occasion was not all that could be desired. Dick fought bravely, but felt he was an utter failure, while Miss Ruy once or twice was nearly giving up the game through feeling unwell. Once Dick put in a word about the weather, but he was not sure what the answer was. His head seemed screwed on the wrong way.

At last there was a pause in the play, when he suddenly blurted out, "I'm glad to meet you again, Miss Ruy." But Miss Ruy had let her racquet fall and declared she was not able to continue the game. The others gathered round, and Dick assisting her to a seat, ran to the refreshment tent for a glass of wine, and then assisted her to a shady seat in one of the side walks.

"I am sorry you feel unwell, the weather is rather warm for tennis."

"Do you think so, do you really sympathise with me? I was always under the impression that I was 'nothing to you.'"

"I think, Miss Ruy, that the quoting of that sentence should be as familiar to you as to me, but there is no use quarrelling over it"—Dick was coming round. "It is past and gone. But I may tell you that I always suspected a certain party of telling infamous lies, and otherwise causing mischief."

"I don't only suspect, but I know it," replied Miss Ruy, with some spirit, "but you must have known that I would never suspect you of any dishonourable action."

"Miss Ruy! May!"

The exclamation escaped Dick so suddenly that he felt somewhat bewildered, but the look that he got promptly brought him to his senses, and he at once proposed to have a walk through the grounds, which proposal was accepted with a sweet smile.

"There they go," said Mr. Septimus Brown to himself, as he smiled and slapped his thigh in evident glee, "I've bagged them."

Alan Macgregor.

Poor Poots!

He had Hard Work to get a Laugh.

Poots is not one who laughs very often. He is a serious man, and his most intimate friends have rarely seen him indulge in a smile unless invited. But the other day, while reading the paper, his eye fell upon the following:

"The most wasted of all days is that upon which one has not laughed."

This set Poots pondering. Was it possible that he had been wasting days all his life, he who was always so careful of his time? He resolved that this waste of time should stop. He would at least get one good laugh out of the twenty-four hours, cost what it might.

So he began to look about for something to laugh at. No sooner had he arrived at this determination than he heard Mrs. Poots' footsteps in the hall.

"Here comes Mrs. Poots," he mentally said, "perhaps she will say something funny that I can laugh at, and at least this day won't be wasted." And he attempted to smile as she opened the door.

But the smile froze upon his lips as he saw the deep cloud on her brow.

"Mr. Poots," she said, in hollow tones, "did you post the letter I gave you last Monday?"

"Yes, yes—that is I think I did."

"You did not, Mr. Poots. I just found it in your overcoat pocket. It was a letter to my mother (sob) telling her to come yesterday without fail, and stay a week with us (more sobs). And this explains why she is not here."

Poots felt inclined to laugh at this, for he hated his mother-in-law, but he didn't dare. He could only elongate his face and express hypocritical regret over his negligence.

But Mrs. Poots was not to be mollified in this way. She began to upbraid him bitterly—said he neglected to post the letter on purpose—because he didn't love her poor dear mother. Through him she would never see her mother again so long as she lived; and then she threw her apron over her head and began to weep hysterically.

He could only pacify her by vowing that he dearly loved his mother-in-law, and promising to telegraph for her at once.

"Poor start for a laugh this morning," muttered Poots, dismally, as he left his house for the City.

Descending the station steps hastily, he narrowly escaped having his eye punched out by an umbrella that the man just ahead of him was carrying on his shoulder. He reviled the fellow's stupidity, who stopped to revile him back, thereby obstructing the way, and a policeman on the landing threatened to arrest them both.

Nothing laughable about that, certainly, except for the bystanders, who showed that they were not wasting their day whatever others might be doing. This brought Poots to a remembrance of what he had set out to do, and he reflected grimly:

"Shall I get no laugh out of anything? Must I, then, waste another day?"

It was plain to him that in order to laugh, he must at least keep his temper, and he resolved that he would, though it was a severe trial to do so, when the ticket-seller shoved back the shilling he proffered with the remark that it was counterfeit. Where was the anticipated laugh coming in, that was to prove that his day was not wasted?

A happy thought struck him. He would buy a comic paper; but as he reflected he had never yet seen any one laughing over a joke in a comic paper, he relinquished the idea and took the next train that came along.

Before many stations had been passed he found himself wedged in between a fat woman on one side and an inebriated man on the other, with no chance of finding a seat elsewhere; and to crown all he was carried far beyond his station before he was able to look out and see what the station was.

He was pretty wrath by this time, but that was nothing compared to his condition when he reached the office, and found that a bill for a large amount had gone to protest on account of the negligence of his book-keeper, and that a house he owned had been burnt down—a total loss because his agent hadn't renewed the insurance.

"Why don't you laugh?" he shrieked, as he surveyed his pallid countenance in the office mirror.

During the day he heard of the failure of a firm that owed him a considerable sum of money, and learnt that the cashier of the bank in which he was a heavy stockholder, had fled to Spain with all the funds.

"If I could only laugh once, perhaps, this day would not be wholly wasted," he moaned ironically, as he wrung his hands without the aid of a patent wringer.

But he did finally laugh. A telegram came from his mother-in-law in response to his own, saying that she could not possibly come that week, and she wasn't able to say when she could come; and the poor man fairly shrieked with joy.

But it was a narrow escape, though, from a wasted day in the life of Mr. Poots.

W. O. P.

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OPENING THE SEASON.

What the Fresh Air Fund has Done, and what it is Going to Do.

On June 20th, 1892, a party of 200 little children, collected from the worst slums of London, boarded a number of special trams, and rode down on them to the borders of Epping Forest. They then alighted, formed into a long irregular line, four abreast, and tramped along to the shelter which had been erected for their reception. Here they enjoyed a hearty meal, and afterwards romped about on the grass and in the cool glades until tea-time. After another substantial meal they were collected and marched back to the trams which carried them to the Shadowland they called "home."

This was the first Fresh Air Fund excursion in the United Kingdom, and was the result of the generosity of those who were readers of *Pearson's Weekly* at that time. From so small a beginning the Fresh Air Fund has developed and increased year by year, until the total number of children dealt with, not only in London, but in all the chief cities of the United Kingdom, was, at the end of last year, 800,000!

During the first season readers subscribed about £800, with the result that 22,000 little children were given a day in the country. Last year the amount spent was £4,617, and 114,000 little ones in different parts of the United Kingdom had a day's outing during the summer months. This year, starting from to-day, we are going to collect at least £4,860, and a minimum of 120,000 children are going to be sent away for a holiday. In order to enable the local committees in the provincial towns and cities to proceed with their arrangements for collecting the children and catering for their food, it has been necessary for the promoters of the Fund to guarantee half the amount—£2,430.

Every year the number of towns benefited by the scheme has been increased, and this year seven new towns are added to the former list, making a total of thirty-two.

These towns have been selected according to population, and every place with 100,000 inhabitants or more is included. Under these conditions such towns as Brighton and Southampton have been brought in, and it may occur to some readers who are in the habit of visiting such places in holiday time, that the objects of the fund are being defeated because the children living there are always getting fresh air. This, however, is a mistake. Representatives of the Fresh Air Fund have carefully investigated the matter, and have proved to their satisfaction that slums exist—some of them terrible slums indeed—even in such towns as Brighton and Southampton. In these slums children live whose existence is very far from happy. They are insufficiently clothed, badly fed, and never get a chance of freedom from their squalid surroundings. The ozone that does you so much good when you run down to the seaside does not freshen the vitiated air of these slums.

The committees of ladies and gentlemen which have been formed in the provincial towns are, of course, unable to carry out the excursions on precisely the same lines as those in London, in consequence of local difficulties. They are, therefore, allowed to spend ninepence on each child in whatever they consider to be the best manner. At the end of the season the secretary supplies to the head office a certificate stating that the number of children allocated to his particular town have been taken for a day's outing, and that the money allowed has been spent in the correct manner.

Although the working arrangements for the provincial cities are carried out locally, the funds are supplied from the chief office in London, to which all subscriptions are sent by readers of this paper.

The whole of the money subscribed is spent in food and fares for the tiny ones, and all the working expenses are equally borne by the Ragged School Union and the Proprietors of *Pearson's Weekly*, the Council of the former having placed its great organisation of that institution at the disposal of the Fund. It will, therefore, be seen that the Fund holds a unique position, all other institutions deducting from the money subscribed whatever is expended in the way of management and office expenses. So that, for every ninepence sent in, one child is given a complete day's happiness.

The sum of £8 2s. 0d. covers the cost of a party of 200 children, including six adults to look after them.

One of the most gratifying features of the scheme is the hearty and practical interest which Colonials and Britishers living abroad take in the little children whom it benefits. Although the Fund closes in October of each year, subscriptions continue to come in through the winter months from every quarter of the globe. Only a few weeks ago no less a sum than £35 came to hand from the non-commissioned officers and men of the Railway Pioneer Regiment in South Africa. This is only one instance among many in which our soldiers have proved their generosity by devoting a portion of their hard-earned savings to alleviating the unhappiness of the little ones at home.

During the coming summer months parties of children will be taken out into the country from the following towns. The number of children placed against each town is the minimum and will, it is to be hoped, be greatly exceeded:

London	41,500	Leicester	2,000	Derby	2,000
Liverpool	5,000	Portsmouth	2,000	Halifax	2,000
Manchester	5,000	Bolton	2,000	Southampton	2,000
Birmingham	5,000	Cardiff	2,000	Belfast	3,500
Leeds	3,000	Sunderland	2,000	Dublin	3,000
Sheffield	3,000	Oldham	2,000	Edinburgh	2,000
Bristol	2,500	Blackburn	2,000	Glasgow	5,000
Bradford	2,000	Brighton	2,000	Dundee	2,000
Hull	2,000	Preston	2,000	Aberdeen	2,000
Nottingham	2,000	Norwich	2,000		
Newcastle-on-Tyne	2,000	Gateshead	2,000		120,000
		Plymouth	1,500		

It depends entirely upon yourself and your fellow-readers whether this year—the Coronation year—will be a record one.

If you feel sufficiently interested in the movement to justify your giving even quite a small sum, will you please address it to the Hon. Sec. of the Fresh Air Fund, *Pearson's Weekly* Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., from whom collecting forms can be obtained on application.

All subscriptions will be duly acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

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Complete in Two Numbers.

Vedo's Golden Collar.

By "AUSTRALIS."

THE THREAD OF THE STORY.

A large fortune is left to Myowne Gleniln by an uncle, on condition that she marries the first man who proposes to her on or after her twenty-first birthday. She really loves Mr. Carlyon, her father's secretary, but Harrison Elliot, who is employed in the office of the lawyer who made her uncle's will, proposes on her birthday, and after consulting her father she decides to accept him, on the assurance that her money does not attract him. Myowne possesses a dog, whose name, Vedo, is fashioned in precious stones on his golden collar.

Ten years later, Myowne, now Mrs. Elliot, is in Melbourne, whither she and her husband had gone after the bank smash, in which her and her father's money were lost.

When the money is gone, Elliot appears in his true light—that of a scoundrel, making no secret now of the fact that he married Myowne for her money. One day Carlyon arrives, bringing the news of Mr. Gleniln's death. During his stay in Melbourne he had discovered Vedo's collar in a pawnshop, where it had been taken when hard times came. He brings it with him and leaves it with Mrs. Elliot.

Elliot comes in shortly afterwards, and, finding the collar, makes a great fuss, and then reveals to Myowne the fact that Carlyon loved her when he was her father's secretary, and he orders her to return the collar. Just then a telegram arrives for Elliot, on reading which he at once goes out. Later on, Myowne picks it up, and this is what it says: "Just arrived from England; at Turner's hotel. If you don't come at once, shall call at your house.—Pauline Marryat."

Hardly has she finished reading the message than a woman appears at the door. She is Miss Marryat. Elliot did not arrive at the hotel, so she has come to his house, and is surprised to find that he is a married man. She starts abusing Myowne, but just then Carlyon appears, and she leaves breathing threats of vengeance.

Carlyon tells Myowne of his love for her, and before going leaves with her an address which, he says, will always find him, and that when she sends he will come to her from wherever he is.

CHAPTER III.

The Postscript.

The sun had set in a sea of golden clouds, leaving the sky rosy red, blushing under the parting glance of the fire-king. The moon, a silver crescent, modestly appeared, and stars, like fairy lamps, dotted the dark blue sky—diamonds set in a royal robe.

Near an open window, watching the beauties of the dying day, a pale, delicate-looking woman stood, to whom each star seemed to look down upon her with the eyes of one whose memory was ever present with her.

"Will he come to me? Shall I see his face but once again?" she sighed. "Ah, the dreary past, five long weary years: with only memory and pain and sorrow. Ah! wealth has brought no happiness."

The room was a very handsomely furnished boudoir. A door from it led to her own bedroom, and the window opened on a well-sheltered balcony, from which the view over Melbourne was very beautiful, extending far beyond the city.

The lady, tired with standing, now took a chair on the balcony, to better enjoy the soft, balmy air, when sounds of voices from below reached her ear.

"You say you wish to know the truth, Mr. Elliot? Surely you can trust me and wait?"

"Dr. Dawsey, I must know what to expect. She has been ill now five years, ever since that fatal day when the unfortunate woman called who most undoubtedly caused this tedious and most expensive illness."

"I presume, then, there could have been no other cause that you might perhaps recall, and thus assist me in my endeavour to effect a cure."

"No, doctor, I know of none. I have, as far as possible, ever had Mrs. Elliot's interest at heart, and sacrificed my hopes and wishes for her happiness. I am living here at a frightful cost, solely because you thought the air would suit her. In all matters I never consider myself and consequently I have always gone to the wall, like a fool that I am."

"Ah! yes; to be sure—certainly—I quite agree with you," thoughtlessly answered the pre-occupied doctor.

"Now, it so happens I am deeply interested in a certain remunerative business which demands all my attention and energy, and this illness is a wretched drag, hampering me at every turn. Doctor, I want you to tell me what you think of the case."

"Your wife may live for years. I can give you no other hope. I have nothing to guide me. Internal injuries are so difficult to get at, and—it is very strange, she does not seem to remember what could have happened. I will run up and see Mrs. Elliot, and look in again upon you before I leave the house."

"May I intrude, Mrs. Elliot?" asked the doctor in a fresh, cheery voice, which carried health and brightness with it, as he knocked at the boudoir door.

"Ah, doctor, is it you?" And Myowne, while speaking, entered the room from the balcony. "I am so glad to see you. Do you know, when I look at you I always think that a good, kind fairy must have had part in your christening, bestowing on you the rare gifts of being able to give to others comfort, trust, and hope."

"Beware, Mrs. Elliot, I cannot consent to bribery of any kind. I am here as a stern man, who will not allow his judgment to be tampered with by a patient, however skilful she may be." And he smiled in a fatherly manner, taking her hand and touching the thin, white wrist. "Now then, just you tell me at once what you have been thinking about. Your pulse is far too excited for my satisfaction." He selected

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a large handsome easy-chair, and ensconced himself opposite to Mrs. Elliot, who was half-resting on the sofa, her face slightly flushed, and a smile flitting over her lips. "I shall ask you a few questions," continued Dr. Dawsey, "and I shall expect a few answers."

"Ah, doctor, I cannot tell anything; please don't ask—don't ask!"

"Now, my dear Mrs. Elliot, permit me. I am an old man. You have told me yourself I remind you of your father, and you remind me of my daughter—God bless her! As it happens, I know from experience that there are some troubles, some sorrows, some—well, some matters certain wives cannot tell certain husbands, and *vice-versa*. Therefore I want you, my dear, to think that your father is near you, and open your heart to me. Believe me, I will never betray your confidence."

Myowne looked up into Dawsey's face with astonishment. "Why, what have I ever said or done? What has betrayed me to make you think I have any trouble?" she asked hesitatingly.

"What but your face, your manner, your illness—everything surrounding you. Doctors should not only prescribe for the patient's bodily health, they should try to cure the mind as well."

There was a silence in the room for some moments, only broken by a handsome clock chiming the hour.

"Ah!" exclaimed Myowne with a start, "Five years ago this very day and hour." Then turning to Dr. Dawsey, she continued:

"Doctor, you told me once you knew something about me and mine; tell me all you do know, and I—I will trust you with the rest."

"I remember in my younger days being acquainted with a gentlemanly young fellow, then studying for the Bar, called Gleniln—your father. I never knew him intimately, but I heard how he left the profession of his choice to take his uncle's place in the great bank. I remember hearing of a failure which crushed him out of sight. Then, leaving the old country, we change the scene to this fair city of the Sunny South. I remember that for a time messages appeared in all papers, asking for someone by the name of Harrison Elliot, as he would hear of something to his advantage."

"Was that the first you heard of us?"

"Yes."

"Before that we had spent years of trouble in New Zealand and here, struggling with poverty."

"Yes, yes, I heard of that. Then came the strange news that your husband's first cousin, a comparatively young man, had died suddenly, and his wealth quite unexpectedly came to Mr. Elliot."

"That happened five years ago."

"I first became acquainted with Mr. Elliot at the inquest held on the body of an English woman who, just after her arrival here, had been found drowned."

"Yes—Pauline Marryat. I was very ill at the time—in fact, I knew nothing for weeks, and on recovering was amazed to find we were rich, living in this house. Tell me about the poor woman."

"There was a letter found in her pocket bearing Mr. Elliot's name, and on that account his presence was required. He was dreadfully shocked, I recollect, for he had been waiting to see her at the hotel for hours, but she never came. A jealous admirer of hers, who had arrived from home in the same boat with Miss Marryat, followed her all day and gave her a watery grave, for which he is now undergoing a life sentence."

"Dreadful! Hardly having left me, to die so fearfully; poor thing! And I spoke harshly to her; but I was so miserable, I think I hardly knew what I said."

"Do not let that trouble you, my dear lady," said the doctor cheerfully; "but tell me all I want to know, all I ought to know, if I am to effect a cure."

"Don't say that, old friend. You know I can never be cured; it is simply a question of time and patience. Tell me the truth fearlessly—I can bear it. Truly, life is not so sweet a thing that I should regret the loss of it. Ah! were it not for a promise that binds me, I would not have helped you to make my life last even this long."

"I knew it from the first, poor child. But he is

The doctor gazed at it with interest; the next moment a cry broke from his lips.

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kinder to you now; forgive me, I heard he was not always so."

"Yes, he is kinder now," Myowne sighed wearily. "Indeed, I fear he blames himself for much that is not his fault."

"Are you quite sure of that?" asked her companion

"Ah! doctor, is this generous?"

"There, there, we will let it drop. You have something else to tell me."

"Yes," softly answered Myowne, while the rosy blush of a young girl mantled her pale cheek, and a glorious light gleamed in her eyes. "But it is so difficult, I—I cannot find words to tell you."

"Then don't try, my dear. I will in some other way find out all you want me to know. Come, cheer up; why, you look as young and blooming as you must have done years ago, when you wore a bridal dress."

Myowne's eyes fell, and the doctor rose to go. "Good-bye; take care of yourself. And mind, send for me directly you need my services. Don't suffer pain uselessly."

"Doctor," said Myowne suddenly, "will you do me a favour?"

"With all the pleasure in life—half-a-dozen, if you'll let me."

"No, thank you; only one. Do you see that little dog's collar on the mantelpiece, behind the clock, hanging on a nail?"

"Yes; a pretty one, too, and of some value," answered the doctor, taking down Vedo's collar.

"Will you take that collar to the address I will give you, and place it in the hands of the person I shall name?"

"I will do anything you wish."

"Thank you, doctor. Ah, I know far better than you how nearly the sands have run through the hour-glass of my life; and there is in this world one—who—" she hesitated nervously.

"I understand," said Dr. Dawsey gently, watching the tremulous lips of his patient. "Go on, my dear."

"Five years ago he gave me his address. I have not seen or heard from or of him since. I do not even known if he is still there or not."

"How do you know he still lives?"

"I know he lives; I am sure of that. He could not die without telling me, and"—she added very softly—"he has not told me so yet—not yet, not yet."

The doctor looked at Mrs. Elliot with a sort of fear in his eyes, but she continued:

"Knowing how short my time is, I hoped his instinct would bring him to me, for I wished it so ardently; but he never came, and I had no means—at least, no reliable ones—of communicating with him."

"You can trust me. Give me the address; I will take any message you may desire to send, and will place the collar in his own hands. Will he understand what it means?"

"He will understand that I remember. Ah, doctor, how can I ever thank you?"

"By getting well and bright. Do that, and I shall be well repaid," answered Dr. Dawsey, trying to smile.

"Here is his name and address," said Myowne, producing a small card carefully folded in silver paper.

The doctor gazed at it with interest. The next moment a cry broke from his lips.

"Carlyon! why, I know the gentleman intimately. He never told me he knew you, though he must have heard me mention your name sometimes. Dear, dear, how very strange!"

"You know him! Oh, doctor! Is he in Melbourne?" asked Myowne, trembling violently.

"He is and has been for the last five years. He did intend returning to England, but suddenly gave up the idea. He lives in the same place where he put up for only a few weeks at first, and said once he would rather pay double its worth than leave it. I chaffed him a bit, and asked him what he would do should the house be burnt down, but he took it quite seriously and answered that, being able to afford it, in such a case he would buy the land and rebuild."

Myowne, who had listened eagerly, gave a sigh of glad content as she recalled the words Carlyon had spoken when giving her his address: "It will always find me, even if it be years hence." How true he had been! For her sake he had remained where she could always find him.

"When do you want to see him?" he asked gently. "And what message shall I take?"

"Tell him I have not forgotten my promise. I will live as long as strength permits for his sake. Tell him he shall know when I wish to see him, for I shall see him once more—tell him to wait a little longer."

Dr. Dawsey could not say anything. He clasped the white hand in his, and, with Vedo's collar resting in his breast pocket left the room, and repaired to his house, entirely forgetting to see Mr. Elliot again.

The next few days Dr. Dawsey, who was what may be termed a fashionable physician, found his time so fully occupied that it was impossible for him to look up Mr. Carlyon. It was fully a week after his interview with Myowne that one morning Mr. Elliot called to see him. The name brought back the recollection of Vedo's collar, and an honest flush of regret came to the old man's face.

Mr. Elliot was just on the point of leaving for Adelaide on business, and he wished the doctor to call and see his wife.

"It would be shocking if anything happened to her while I am away," he remarked. "She said something last night about not being a trouble to me any more when I return; what could she mean?"

"Did she say that?" anxiously queried Dr. Dawsey. "Strange, strange; could the spirit, drawing near to the change, see beyond the veil that dims our limited vision? When do you leave?"

"I go to-morrow to see a friend at Queencliff, and expect to return the day after, to leave for Adelaide the following day. Will you call and see Mrs. Elliot to-morrow while I am gone?"

"I will do so without fail."

"And you'll tell me what you think before I go to Adelaide? It is an awful nuisance having her ill just now. However, I always have had things against me, and I am getting used to it. Good-bye."

And Mr. Elliot left the doctor busy writing a few lines to ask Carlyon to call next day, feeling he would not dare to face Myowne with the collar still in his possession.

Carlyon was not slow in answering the summons. Five years had told somewhat on him. The kindly face was graver, the lines near the eyes and round the corners of the sensitive mouth were deeply graved. Over his whole person there seemed to be cast a shade of sorrow. It was noticeable in the tones of the gentle voice, in the rare smile, even in the listless pose of his head and hand. And his general preoccupation struck the doctor uneasily, as he urged him to take a glass of wine.

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"I have not touched wine for five years, doctor, and I am none the worse for it."

"Five years!" muttered Dr. Dawsey. "So, so—indeed!" he remarked aloud. "I thought you a wiser man than to be obliged to take the pledge."

"I took no pledge—I lost the taste for it one night, and I get along as well without it."

Then there was a pause. Carlyon had become thoughtful. With the eye of the mind he saw again a little room, a well-remembered, graceful figure, and a voice re-echoing like music in his heart seemed again to say the unforgotten words: "I never touch wine now."

The doctor also was thoughtful, reflecting upon the strange message with which he was intrusted. Then in a voice strangely unlike his usual cheery tones he began:

"I asked you to come and see me for a particular purpose."

"Really? I am quite at your service, doctor. Is it another charitable affair? What is it this time—man, woman, or child?" and the faintest smile quivered round his lips, as he spoke.

"A woman," answered the doctor seriously.

"Ah, poor thing. Well, it is good to be rich, if only to be able to help others. How much do you require?"

"This time I do not want money."

It was not so much the meaning of the words that Carlyon noticed, as the way in which they were uttered. His interest was slightly roused, but while Dr. Dawsey hesitated how to proceed, the faint spark died out, and Carlyon relapsed into indifference. But the doctor was now determined to make a plunge, and continued, in a firmer voice:

"I have undertaken to convey to you a message, which—which——"

"Which bothers you somewhat, eh, doctor?" said his friend, interrupting him. "I thought something was wrong directly I saw you."

"What! Are you a physiognomist?"

"By no means; I only noticed that you looked worried, and supposed you wished me to help you in some matter. I need hardly tell you what you know so well, I am always at your service."

"Yes, yes, you are a pearl among men. How often you have aided me in my various schemes to assist the poor and destitute! I cannot think how I would have managed without you."

"Tut, tut! say no more about that. What message have you for me?"

"Only this," answered Dr. Dawsey, drawing from his breast pocket Vedo's golden collar, and placing it in Carlyon's hand.

There was barely a second of intense stillness. Then Carlyon raised his head a new, a transformed, inspired man. The light of hope was in his expressive eyes, a flush of joy brightened the pale face, and a winsome smile, like a sunbeam on a cloudy day, lit up the whole countenance.

"Vedo's collar! Doctor, who gave you this for me? Don't keep me in suspense, I cannot bear it now. I have become so anxious with the long long strain of constant watching and waiting for one word, one sign. Doctor, tell me she lives."

"Gently! gently! Yes, she lives. Why, you excite yourself like a boy who expects to receive his first love-letter. Take it quietly. Your nerves are quite unstrung; I shall have to talk seriously to you, or there will be mischief here." And Dr. Dawsey looked anxiously into the happy face of his friend.

Carlyon was still on his knees beside the couch, watching the face of her he loved.

"There, doctor, I am as grave as an owl—as quiet as a church mouse on its very best behaviour. Would you have me morose and miserable? Shall I not even smile, when my heart is so full of sunshine? Nonsense, doctor, I am happy; and why should I not be so, when my darling lives and remembers me?"

Dr. Dawsey shook his head, and, in a few very carefully chosen words, gave the gist of his conversation with Myowne, at the same time referring to her illness and other minor matters. He mentioned Mr. Elliot, casually and remarked that husband and wife seemed to get along better now, and that the former after his present visit to Queencliff, intended going to Adelaide.

Just then a servant brought a verbal message and a

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letter to the doctor, who instantly opened the letter, and read:

"Dear Doctor, Good Old Friend,—Please come to me. It is time. Bring Vedo's collar with you.

"Myowne."

The five last words before the signature were underlined, and he fully understood their meaning. For an instant Dr. Dawsey hesitated, and watched Carlyon, who, after gazing at the collar, was putting it in his breast-pocket. Then the doctor gave him the letter, simply remarking:

"Read it, and come with me."

Twenty minutes later Dr. Dawsey and his friend had reached "Elliotville." There was a depressing stillness in the house, and the very air seemed heavy with the perfume of flowers from the large conservatory.

A fresh-faced, good-tempered looking nurse met the doctor in the hall, where she had evidently been watching for him.

"Well, Mrs. Parsons, what means this message you sent me just now, requesting me to call and see Mrs. Elliot at once? Surely she is no worse?"

"Bad enough, doctor, though she wouldn't let on. I sent you a letter she wrote at noon. She kept it, hoping you'd call, but when you didn't come, she let me send it. Shall I take you to her room?"

"By all means; lead the way, please," answered the doctor.

As they reached the first landing, Carlyon came close to Dr. Dawsey and detained him. His face was very pale, his voice low and shaken as he spoke.

"Doctor, I must see her; just for one moment. Manage it how you can, how you will; but I must see her. Remember I am a desperate man."

"I cannot allow you to see her at all, unless you promise me perfect calmness and self-control."

"I promise, God help me," he whispered sadly.

The nurse was holding a door open at the end of the well-carpeted passage, and a smart housemaid came from the room, where she had taken Mrs. Parsons' place during her absence.

The doctor spoke to the nurse for a few moments, and then remarked aloud:

"Dear, dear, unconscious, eh? That's bad."

"Yes, doctor, though we did our best to restore her, remedies failed."

"I will see what can be done at once," said Dr. Dawsey, turning to the door.

But Carlyon, who had been listening to every word, stepped forward. By a strong effort of will he was now perfectly calm and quiet, his voice steady, and his face, though still pale, showed no excitement. He drew his friend on one side.

"Doctor, one moment. I have heard all. She is insensible and remedies have failed. Grant me one favour; I will never ask you another. Send the nurse away; come into that room with me, and I believe, Heaven helping me, that I can bring back her sleeping spirit to life again. You will be there to do what need be done, should I fail."

Dr. Dawsey looked in amazement at the speaker, then hesitated, and smiled. He was not a bigoted medical man of the old school, where everything has to be done by fixed rule. His ideas were broad, and he believed it possible to learn a lesson even from the lips of a child. Therefore, his friend's request did not seem extraordinary, but greatly interested him, and after hastily whispering to the nurse to keep within call, he drew Carlyon into Mrs. Elliot's dainty boudoir.

Myowne was lying on a low couch near the open window, through which the setting sun cast his rays of red and gold upon her pale, delicate face. She had evidently not been prepared for her sudden indisposition, for she was dressed in a handsome white morning gown, at the neck of which, among rich laces and ribbons, nestled a bunch of flowers, now crushed and withered.

The two gentlemen stood silently near the door.

"God bless you for this, Dawsey, old man," softly said Carlyon. "If I fail it won't be your fault; but the voice of love should have weight here, and thank heaven, she loves me."

"Remember her husband," whispered the doctor solemnly.

"I will remember the man who bought her, poor darling; who ruined her life, broke her heart, and perhaps killed her. Don't speak of him. Let me go." And, freeing himself from the doctor's detaining hands, he softly went towards the couch, while Dawsey, closely watching him, remained motionless near the door.

Carlyon looked down at the face that for so many years had been his star of hope and love; and with something struggling in his throat and a weight oppressing his heart and soul, he slowly bent down near the couch, till his face was almost on a level with hers. Then he laid one hand on her head, the other on her clasped fingers resting on her bosom, and approaching his lips to her ear, he spoke softly, intently, firmly believing she would hear and answer him.

"Myowne, my darling, speak to me."

He had to repeat the words several times before her hands at last began to move under the pressure of his. Then she opened her eyes widely, and they rested full upon him, with a look of such joy that earth could have no share in it.

The doctor, quite delighted with the success of the experiment, approached and gave the patient a reviving drink; but he looked anxiously into the face, noting something in the eyes that seemed to chill him; and, telling Carlyon so, he turned to a table near by to write a telegraphic message to the husband.

Carlyon was still on his knees beside the couch, watching the face of her he loved with an intensity that would have been painful under other circumstances. Myowne had closed her eyes and seemed to be resting, but as the timepiece chimed six o'clock she looked up again and whispered softly:

"Six o'clock; five—years—ago."

"Ah, I have not forgotten that hour—it will ever live in our memories."

"In your memory, not in mine—unless sweet memory goes with us when we take the long journey through unseen, unknown space, dark and cold; further away a cloud mist, growing thinner and clearer; suddenly a starry splendour, and endless glories stretching away into infinite distance. Then beauteous peace, calm and content everywhere; music such as mortal ear could never understand or realise; happiness, such as we cannot conceive or dream—glorifying, wonderful. But I shall be all alone till you come. I will be near you, and watch and wait for you."

She closed her eyes again. The doctor had written his telegram, read it over hastily to Carlyon, and went to the door to give it, with directions, to the nurse. Somewhere in the neighbourhood a band of a better class than usual was playing "The Last Rose of Summer," and gently, on the evening air, the soft, subdued strains were carried into the room as Myowne again opened

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her eyes. This time she smiled up into Carlyon's face, and the dreamy, wondering look was gone. Gently she raised one white hand, placing it on his shoulder, and slipping the arm round his neck, drew him nearer to her while she spoke.

"Dearest, you cannot break the sweet spell now; it is so late, so late. Speak the words which five years ago I would not hear."

Carlyon, controlling his emotions with difficulty, drew nearer, till his breath fanned her cheek; and very quietly, slowly but impressively, he said:

"Myowne, my dear one, I love you, darling, with all my heart and soul."

"Yes," she murmured tenderly, a glad smile spreading over her face, "I knew it, but I wanted to hear you say it. It is such exquisite music. Remember our old watchword: 'In everything always together.' For all time."

"For ever, and for ever," answered Carlyon, fondly passing his hand over her glossy hair.

A pause, and then a shy, sweet whisper:

"Will you kiss me, my own dearest, just once?"

The words were a mere tremulous sigh, but they reached his ear, and seemed to him like an angel's song.

And Carlyon gently raised the slight figure in his arms, and bent his head till his lips touched hers.

A kiss, soft as a breath, tender and true, life-giving and life-taking. A moment, hardly a moment later, Carlyon raised his head, and Myowne sank back. Then a wild, heart-rending cry, a desolate moan, burst as a wail from his lips.

"Myowne, my own darling! My love, my love! Oh, take me with you. Remember, 'In everything always together,' together for evermore!" And, overcome with grief, he buried his face in her soft, cold hands.

The doctor had considerable difficulty in getting Carlyon out of the way. He feared terrible consequences should Mr. Elliot come and find him there; but, fortunately, all passed off well, and the husband did not return to Melbourne till the next day.

Dr. Dawsey had taken Carlyon to his own house, weak and helpless as a child, and submitting to his will without a word. He was so calm and quiet that a fear possessed the doctor that something dangerous was threatening his friend, and he was very desirous to call in a medical friend in consultation. But Carlyon would not hear of this.

"But, man alive! what ails you?" asked Dawsey.

"Nothing, friend; I am well and happier far than I hoped to be. I will tell you, Myowne has been with me ever since that fearful moment; she never leaves me. I know she is waiting for me, and I know I shall join her. I want to put all things in order, make my will, and then I shall be ready to obey the call when it comes. To you, Dawsey, I shall leave certain monies to be employed for the poor and destitute as you may think fit; for myself, I ask you to promise me one thing."

"I will do anything I can for you."

"When the time comes remember our watchword was, 'In everything always together.' Do you understand my meaning?"

"I understand. Dear, dear! This is very, very painful; you, too, one of my most valued friends."

"Yes, old man, I know, and I am sorry to give you so much sad trouble; but you must promise that she and I will rest together. I shall not mind anything else."

With tears filling his kind old eyes, with his warm, true heart very full, the doctor held out his hand, and in a voice broken with emotion, he gave the desired assurance.

A few months later Mr. Elliot sold off his properties, and went back to England. It was reported that he married again, but, however this may be, he was not seen in Victoria again.

Carlyon lived with Dr. Dawsey, occupying himself with good works. His health was far from good, and he took not the slightest care of himself, facing all weathers and indifferent to discomfort in his desire to benefit the distresses.

He had been ailing for some time past and had given the old doctor considerable uneasiness. But on the first anniversary of Myowne's death he seemed remarkably better. There was a glad light in his eyes, a buoyancy in his step that was refreshing to see, and Dr. Dawsey, congratulating himself that certain new remedies were effecting a cure, went upon his daily duties with a lighter heart. One evening he returned a little later than usual, just in time for his six o'clock dinner. On entering the dining-room he was astonished not to see Carlyon as usual, waiting for him.

"Is Mr. Carlyon out?" he asked the servant.

"No, sir. Mr. Carlyon went to his room about an hour ago."

"Surely he cannot have heard the dinner gong," remarked the doctor, thoughtfully; and after waiting a little longer and feeling uneasy, he decided to go to his friend's room himself. He found him lying on the large sofa that occupied one side of the room and faced the open window, firmly clasping in his hand Vedo's golden collar. At six o'clock he had quietly passed away. It was easy to see how peaceful his end must have been, for the calm face looked very beautiful with its expression of perfect contentment and happiness.

The doctor could almost fancy that Myowne must have been very near him at the mystic hour of his demise, and, indeed, that she called him away with her. As he had wished it, Carlyon found his last rest with Myowne, still tightly clasping in his hand Vedo's golden collar.

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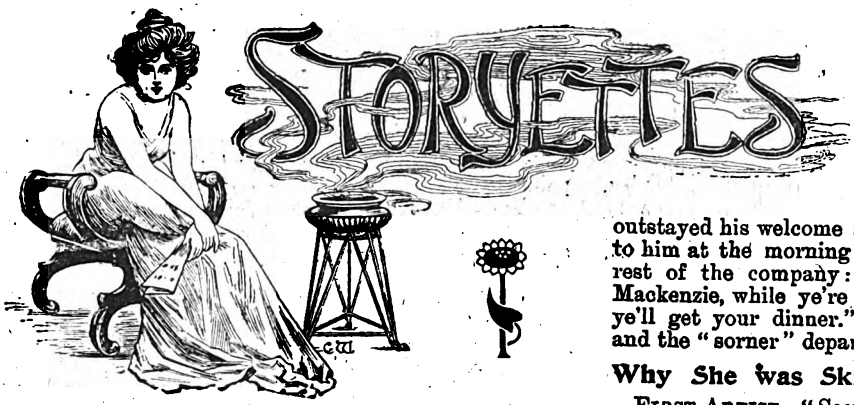

It Was Too High.

"Can you stand on your head?" asked a visitor of little Dudley. "No," he replied, "it is too high up."

He Had Kept Still.

Mother: "How did your face get that strained, agonised look in your photograph? Did the light hurt your eyes?" Small Son: "No, ma. The man told me to keep still, an' I did."

What Would be Left?

A bright little girl who had successfully spelt the word "table" was asked by her teacher what would remain after "t" had been taken away. "The dirty cups and saucers," was the prompt reply.

He Wouldn't Trust Her.

Cumso: "Wait a minute, Fangle. I want to step into the dressmaker's, and pay my wife's bill." Fangle: "Why don't you give her the money, and let her go and pay it?" Cumso: "She'd order another dress."

She Knew What He Wanted.

Tramp: "It is needless to ask you the question, madam. You know what I want." Lady: "Yes, I know what you want badly, but I've only one bar of soap in the house, and the servant is using it. Come again some other time."

Not all Women.

"Are all people that go to America women?" asked little Tommy. "Why, no, my child," said his mamma. "There are a good many men and some little boys, like you, that go." "Then what makes you call them all Emma Grants?" was Tommy's response.

Why He Changed It.

The Gintleman: "No, my man, this is not mine. It was a five-pound note I lost." Paddy: "It was a fi'pun note before Oi got it changed, sor." The Gintleman: "What did you get it changed for?" Paddy: "Och, sure, so the owner could conveniently reward me, sor."

His Future Trade.

A large owner of property scolds his son, who persists in always being the last in his form. "Why, you silly boy, what are you going to do in after-life, if you won't learn anything?" The urchin, casting a sidelong glance at his father's desk, replied: "Well, I shall do the same as you do—every three months, at quarter day, I'll sign receipts for the rent."

A Broad Hint.

It is related of a noble Scottish lady of the olden time, who lived in a remote part of the Highlands and was noted for her profuse liberality, that she was sometimes overburdened with habitual "sorners." When any of them outstayed his welcome she would take occasion to say to him at the morning meal, with an arch look at the rest of the company: "Make a guid breakfast, Mr. Mackenzie, while ye're aboot it; ye dinna ken whaur ye'll get your dinner." The hint was usually taken, and the "sorner" departed.

Why She was Skied.

First Artist: "Seen my portrait of Miss Hylton in the Academy this year?" Second Artist: "Yes." First Artist: "I promised I would paint it for her, you know. Charming girl; in fact, she's a perfect angel." Second Artist: "Ah, I suppose that is why she was skied."

Could a Woman Do It?

Miss Elder: "Well, I maintain that women can do anything men can." Mr. Gazzam: "Oh, no. The auctioneer's business is one women cannot go into." "Nonsense! She'd make every bit as good an auctioneer as a man." "Just imagine an unmarried woman getting up before a crowd and exclaiming, 'Now, gentlemen, all I want is an offer!'"

Something Better Might Come Along.

Daughter: "Mamma, Mr. Black proposed to me last night." Society Mother: "Did you accept him, Ethel?" "Yes, mamma." "Has he any money, Ethel?" "Only five hundred a year, mamma." "Well, Ethel, handle him carefully till the summer. Possibly you may pick up something better during the spring."

Result of "Brain Gymnasium," Nos. 73 to 78.

The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded to the Rev. G. P. Horne, of Lamington, Lanarkshire.

A pencil-case has been sent to each of the following:

Miss E. Samman, 74 Harold Road, Margate; A. Smith, 69 Balmoral Road, New Brompton; Miss L. Smith, 69 Balmoral Road, New Brompton; Miss J. Lawlor, 33 Douglas Street, Cork; W. Barter, 33 Douglas Street, Cork; A. F. Cox, 60 Grantham Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham; F. G. Homer, Richmond Villa, Anderton Park Road, Moseley, Birmingham; D. Welch, 2 Ruskin Avenue, Manor Park, E.; S. J. Bailey, 3 Grove Terrace, Stoke Fields, Guildford; B. Smith, 69 Balmoral Road, New Brompton.

SOLUTIONS.

73. AM-I-ABLE.

74. Pink, Pear, Clover, Pale,
Rill, Stable, Stalo.

75. LON-DON.

76. LENS
EMEU
NEAR
SURFACE
AHOY
COPE
EYES.

77.

R	a	T
O	per	A
B	al	M
E	ch	O
R	ose	S
T	eac	H
B	o	A
U	r	N
R	af	T
N	os	E
S	ta	R

78. O-PINION.

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SAINT INNICE.

The Tale of an Old Maid's Sacrifice.

It was something of an event in Innice Selby's rather commonplace life when Tom Dyrenford, big and handsome, but very pale and still, was carried into her father's house on a shutter, with a charge of birdshot in his breast, and looking for all the world like a man who had not much longer to live.

He was laid on the sofa in the little parlour, all fragrant with the scent from a great jar of roses that stood on the modest centre-table. Innice looked on in a dazed sort of way as the doctor probed after the shot and dressed the wounds. She did what was asked of her in a stupid, mechanical fashion, bringing warm water and bandages, and what-not to the side of the sufferer. She had never before seen a wounded or dead person, and the sight of this young man brought a sense of faintness and sickness to her heart.

How Tom Dyrenford had come to let that unlucky trigger snap just as he was climbing over that gate he never knew. It was an ugly wound, and it kept him in bed four weeks; but there was never a day after he regained consciousness that he did not offer up his thanks to an all-wise Providence for bringing him to that house.

He was a typical man of the world—strong, athletic, but afflicted to the last degree with that nameless weariness—the lack of sufficient ingenuity to discover means of spending a suddenly acquired fortune; and when he awoke to consciousness one morning, very pale and weak, to discover the beautiful earnest face of Innice Selby bending over him, all alight with the eagerness to learn what his slightest wish might be and minister to it, the man's soul was born again within him. He took one long, curious look, and then sank to sleep again, with a childish smile on his face and a sense of utter content at his heart.

For Innice the ensuing weeks were one unalloyed round of perfect bliss. She was twenty-eight years old, and at that age it is something more than a privilege to be permitted to fall in love. She took charge of the invalid as naturally as if he had been a child; and he, for his part, could bear no one else near him. The girl's father, a grey-haired, austere old gentleman, as proud as he was poor, he saw little of, and, truth to tell, he did not grieve much thereat. It was pleasant to lie all day on the little sofa, or in the hammock under the trees, and let Innice read to him by the hour in that sweet, low voice of hers.

Now, there had never been a moment when Tom's wound had been dangerous—that is, not greatly so—only very painful; but, of course, when he began to get strong and well again, he never let a day pass without declaring to this tall, sweet-faced girl that he owed his life to her watchfulness and care. And at the declaration the great serious eyes would light up and the speaker would receive his reward in a look that spoke volumes of love and gratitude.

Like all things that are won easily, the love of this tall girl (whom some of the gossips in the village were already growing to allude to as an old maid) did not influence this pampered young man as strongly as it might have done had it been less readily bestowed. He accepted it naturally and gracefully, with the ease of a practised lover. But there comes an end to all things, and there came a time when there could be no further excuse for his remaining the guest of old Selby.

It was the night before he went away that he discovered how irrevocably the girl's heart was bound up in him. They were walking together under the gold laburnum trees, and she suddenly stopped and covered her face with her hands. Tom gently pulled them away, and discovered that she was crying.

The next instant she was in his arms, and being comforted as a strong man usually comforts a woman who tells him she loves him and thinks it necessary to cry about it. And he himself, feeling, as he did, more deeply in love than he had ever been in his life, surrendered then and there, and when he departed next day it was as Innice Selby's betrothed husband.

Rather to his relief, she had requested him to say nothing to her father. "Please leave that to me," she said. "Father will be grieved or furious—perhaps both. You see I have grown so necessary to him, and I suppose"—with a divine blush—"that he has never given a thought to the idea of losing me. Let me tell him after you are gone."

* * * * * *

The thought of the relationship he had established in that little place was very agreeable to Tom after his return to town. Even after his long rest his old diversions found little charm for him now. His friends rallied him on his listlessness, and more than one of them broadly hintedt hat there must be a woman in the case.

The summer and autumn passed away pleasantly enough. He corresponded regularly for awhile with Innice, and was charmed with the brightness of her letters. When his own began to decrease in number she vexed him with neither questions nor reproaches. It was early in December when she wrote and asked him to come and spend the holidays as her father's guest. "It will surprise you," she added, "but I have not told him yet. I'm a sad coward, I fear, but I have not found the courage. Perhaps you can help me when you come."

A week afterwards she wrote: "I have another surprise for you. You have heard me speak of my little sister. She will reach London on Friday morning, on her way home from school, and you are to meet her, if you will, and escort her here. I know you won't mind, and Gertrude's such a child that we can't endure the idea of her travelling alone."

It was indeed a surprise that awaited Mr. Tom Dyrenford when he repaired to Morley's Hotel the following Friday morning, to meet his *fiancée's* sister—the sort of surprise most men would give a good deal to experience. As the girl rose to greet him her beauty literally struck him speechless. He was dimly conscious of a vision of rose-pink cheeks, of great solemn blue eyes, of a wavy crown of glorious yellow hair. And this was Gertrude, the "child."

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He pulled himself together with an effort, and exchanged some commonplaces with her, after which she retired to prepare for her journey. Dyrenford gave his directions to the servants concerning the luggage and so forth in a mechanical way. The sight of this glowing young beauty—beauty by all odds the most remarkable he had ever seen—had thrown him into a sort of daze. He had not wholly recovered his self-possession until they had driven to Euston and taken their places in the train together.

On the way down Gertrude Selby chatted away to Tom in the most charming way in the world—told him all about her studies, her teachers, her chums. She was just seventeen, though if you had veiled her face you would have taken her for twenty-one, and her manner had all the girlish, innocent fearlessness that men of Tom Dyrenford's stamp find so irresistible.

It was of her sister Innice that she spoke most enthusiastically. "Dear, dear old Innice!" she exclaimed to him with tears in her eyes. "I always call her the saint, because she has been so very, very good to me ever since mamma died. Yes, Mr. Tom—I may call you that, mayn't I? I believe my sister would give her life to make me happy."

Hate himself as he might for it, "Mr. Tom" could not help enjoying his discovery that this exquisitely beautiful child very evidently knew nothing of his engagement to her sister. It was a long journey, and he grew strangely soft towards her as the dusk clouded the windows and she began to nod drowsily. It was the most natural thing in the world that he should place a protecting arm about the slim waist, and pillow the bright head on his shoulder for a nap.

Innice—"Saint" Innice, had Gertrude not called her?—was waiting for them at the little station with a trap drawn by the fat, docile mare that her soul loved. She embraced her "little sister" tenderly, and gave to her lover a greeting that was shy, but inexpressibly sweet.

That night, in the glow of the firelight, Dyrenford was enabled to compare the two sisters closely as they stood with cheeks together and arms interlaced before him. Was it cruel truth or the miserable libel of an overwrought fancy that gave him the impression of the faintest suggestion of crow's feet at "Saint" Innice's eyes and temples?

* * * * *

Dear, dear Tom,—It is now six weeks since you left! I have had but one letter, and that, I fear, not a very satisfactory one. I feel as though the time has come for us to understand each other.

Tom, I implore—no, I command you—to tell me the truth. Do you love my sister?

She has been so different since you went away. She does not come to me with her little joys and troubles any more. She avoids me, too, and when I question her, she is quite cross. More than once I have found her in tears. And, Tom, only last night I stole into her room to kiss her as she slept, and do you know what I found? Your photograph, Tom! It lay upon the counterpane, where it had dropped from her hand as she had fallen asleep. And there were tear stains upon it.

I have thought it was, perhaps, only she that loved you, and that you did not care. But I remember so many things now. Your good-bye kiss to me was a cold one; and Gertrude, you know, would not kiss you at all. She burst out crying and ran out of the room.

Tom, you know that I love you with my whole heart and soul, that every nerve and fibre and atom of your being is so inexpressibly dear to me that I don't see how I could live without you. But I love my little sister, too, and she must not be made to suffer.

You are the only lover I ever had, Tom, and I shall never have another. Be very, very honest with me, my dear boy, and tell me all that is in your heart. If what I think is true I will release you without a word of reproach, though it should kill me.

Innice.

My dear Girl,—Whatever I am, or have been, I am not a scoundrel. You offer to release me. I refuse to be released. I have kept my honour intact heretofore, and do not propose to sully it now. I shall be down by the train that reaches you at eight o'clock on Friday evening, and shall then do myself the honour of begging you to set a day for the wedding. With love,

Tom.

Gertrude Selby had been quite ill for a couple of days; and she was lying asleep on her little bed when her sister stepped in on tiptoe to see her before driving to the station. The girl's cheeks were quite pale, and her hands which lay lightly crossed upon her fair young breast trembled as she slept. As Innice stooped over the bed to kiss the white forehead, two tears stole from beneath the sleeper's lightly-closed eyelids, and she murmured in a half-whisper: "Tom, Tom, oh, my love! When will you come back to me?"

Noiselessly "Saint" Innice stole from the room. In a few minutes her old mare Bess' hoofs were sounding smartly on the smooth, frozen road. The girl looked straight ahead of her as she drove along. Her face was very white, and there was a look in the great, calm eyes that might have given Mr. Tom Dyrenford the heartache if he had been there to see it.

She knew she had plenty of time, and as she neared the railway crossing, half a mile from the station, she pulled Bess to a walk, and letting the reins fall upon the splashboard, pressed her gloved hands nervously to her face. Then tears came. The place was deserted. Not a soul was there to see her weep. Through the tears she gazed far over the frosty fields, thinking long and earnestly of the lover she was going to meet, and of——

There was a jolt and a jar, and old Bess came to a standstill. One of the wheels of the light cart had slipped from the edge of the boarding that served to level the lines with the road and had become wedged against the outer iron rail.

A cut with the whip and a jerk would have ended the difficulty. Or she could have climbed out of the cart and led Bess into the roadway. But she took no such action. She sat there, still and silent, her hands folded in her lap. There was a sort of dreamy resignation in the face that was turned so steadily up to the tranquil stars.

Once she rose from her seat for a moment and glanced over the splashboard to make sure that old Bess was safe from any danger beyond a severe nervous shock and a bad shaking up.

By-and-bye there was a glare of light as, with a roar and a shriek, the last express from Euston, in one of the carriages of which Mr. Tom Dyrenford was calmly collecting his rugs and wraps, came tearing round the curve.

The newspapers of next day duly recorded the "accident." Bess escaped without a scratch.

William Arthur.

THIS IS OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER.

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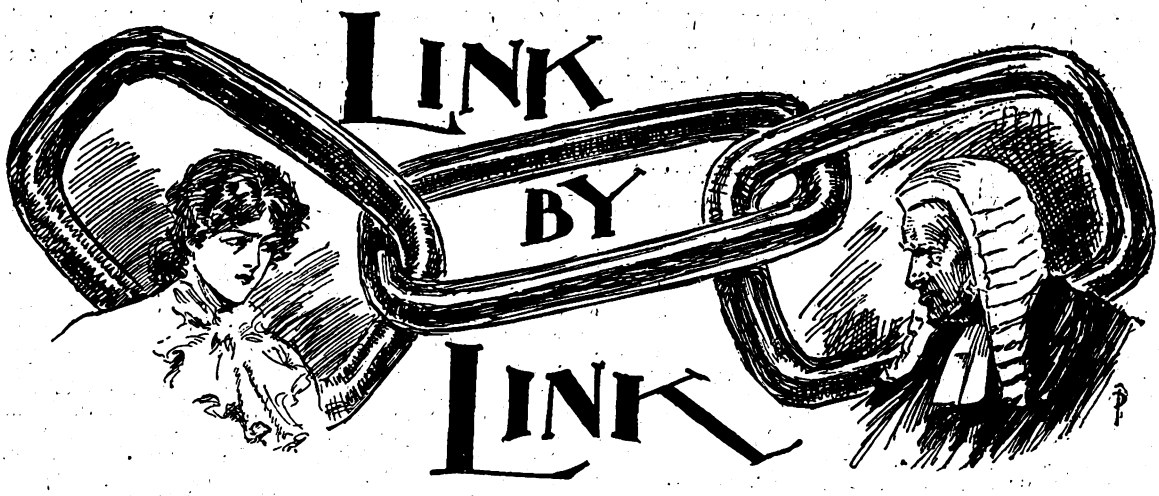

Principal Characters in the Story.

Gerald Mortimer: Of Moulstone Manor, in love with Nina Penhurst.

Mrs. Mortimer: Gerald's mother.

Dr. Branksome: Medical attendant at Moulstone asylum, a great friend of Gerald.

Anthony (or Felix) Cordelvin: An inmate of Moulstone asylum, who was found murdered.

Nina Penhurst: Governess at Moulstone Manor, a distant relative of Cordelvin.

Roderick Vanstone: Nina's guardian. He lives at Streatham, and has under his charge a man named Cordelvin, of weak intellect, whose estate, held in trust for Nina, he manages.

Stephen Vanstone: Roderick Vanstone's son.

The woman in the dark blue cloak: She was seen at Moulstone on the night of the murder, and has acted rather suspiciously since.

Stebbings and Burge: Men employed by Vanstone.

Inspector Trench: Of Scotland Yard, who is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Detective-Inspector Trench Overhears a Conversation.

Detective-Inspector John Trench lost little time in betaking himself once more to the purlieus of Streatham Hill. Although his new discovery of the identity of Mark Burge did not lead him forward on the main line of his investigation, his trained intelligence told him that it was a branch of inquiry well worth following up, and he, therefore, embarked upon it with the utmost keenness.

His present task was not one in which he could exhibit much activity. It was a case of waiting and watching; a criminal investigator's game of "patience." Fully recognising this, the zealous officer, still attired in the guise of an out-of-work artisan, passed an hour or so in pacing the roads in the immediate neighbourhood of the old house on the hill. This occupation proving profitless, in the sense that he did not catch even a momentary sight of Burge, he once more repaired to the "Old Grey Mare," the hostelry he had visited earlier in the day, and beguiled the time by indulging in a quiet game of bagatelle, to be afterwards followed by participation in a four-handed bout at cribbage.

Despite his apparently absorbed interest in these pastimes,—an interest warranted by skill which repeatedly drew forth the praises of the onlookers—the inspector never for one moment relaxed the tension of ear and eye, ever alert and watchful for a sound or sign of Burge. None came, however, and shortly after twelve o'clock, the officer rose and departed. He was a trifle disappointed, but in no sense dispirited. Having elected to play the game of "patience," he was not the kind of man to throw up the cards without giving them a fair trial.

"Burge hasn't turned up to-night, but he may to-morrow and if not then why, he will the next day, or the next," with which philosophical musings, Inspector Trench consoled himself, as he strolled slowly along the road.

Filling his pipe he halted for a moment to strike a match and then paused as he reflected that the blank wall along which he was walking was that which bordered the grounds of Mr. Cordelvin's house. He remained gazing at the wall, as if he might pierce through that and discover the mystery which his detective instincts had persuaded him the place inside contained. As he gazed, a peculiar sound fell suddenly upon his ears.

Chuck, chuck! came the sound from inside the grounds. The detective let his pipe go out and listened intently.

Again came the chucking sound from within.

"If that isn't somebody using a pick-axe," murmured the officer to himself, and pausing for an illustration sufficiently forcible, "why I'm a pro-Boer!"

He listened again, then walked—or rather glided—along the wall to get nearer to the spot from which the sound proceeded. Chuck! chuck! again, and then came a difference of sound as of a shovel scooping up earth. Presently there seemed to be a cessation of work. The shovelling ceased; a mumbling of voices buzzed through the silence.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Inspector Trench to himself, "two of them. Who's digging in there at this time of the night? What are they doing, and what are they talking about? I'd forfeit my future pension to know." He stood with his ear against the wall, but only the indistinct murmur of two voices reached him. To distinguish words was impossible.

He sidled along the wall to the gate, to find it, as he expected, locked. He looked at the straight high wall, almost tempted to make a frantic leap to clutch the top. But foreknowledge of the impossibility of such a thing, restrained him from the ottempt. Hurriedly he speculated on how to procure a ladder, and then hastily dismissed the idea as a vain one. If only a policeman would come along, he might get to the top of the wall *via* his shoulders.

He was about to set off in search of a constable, when once more a sound brought him to a halt. A different sound it was now; a long mocking laugh. The detective listened with bated breath. Again and yet again the weird laugh was repeated. And then there came the swish of skirts through grass and the officer rightly guessed that a woman was running. He kept pace with her on his side of the wall, making towards the gate. There she stopped, and Trench with his ear to the keyhole, bent down to listen. The altercation between Stephen Vanstone and the woman in the blue cloak reached his ears, and a minute later the voice of Roderick Vanstone made itself heard.

Every word of the scrappy conversation the inspector heard. Puzzling and elusive some of the references were, but the

detective, although unable to fully grasp their meaning at the moment, made careful mental note of everything, for consideration later on.

Then even while he was still bending down, he heard close to his ear, the sound of a key in the lock. Quickly he slipped aside, standing out of sight round a slight bend in the wall. A minute later the gate was opened, and the woman stepped out, The flutter of her blue cloak caught the officer's eye, and with it came a flash of illumination.

In a moment he recalled the fact that Dr. Branksome had told him something of a woman in a blue cloak. Gerald Mortimer had encountered such a one. He (the detective) had paid little heed to the story at the time, but he remembered that the alleged woman had worn a blue cloak, and yes, there was something peculiar about her eyes, according to the doctor's description.

Well, he must see her eyes! This sudden appearance of the woman under such strange circumstances had gone a great way towards upheaving the inspector's preconceived theories of the crime he was investigating. He must see the woman's eyes, and he must find out where she lived. The affair was one for delicate handling now. At present he must not accost or question the woman. No suspicion that she had been seen by him must be allowed to enter her mind.

With this thought in his brain, he crossed the road and hurried till he was some distance in front of the retreating woman. Then he recrossed, and stepped briskly back to meet her face to face.

CHAPTER XIX.

The "Lord Mayor" and the "Prisoner."

While the Vanstones, father and son, the woman in the blue cloak, and Detective-Inspector Trench, had thus been engaged in playing their respective parts in connection with the incident in the shrubbery, events had not stood still inside the house close by.

Since his somewhat extraordinary conversation with the unknown prisoner, Mr. Cordelvin, in his own poor, demented fashion, had been turning things over in his rambling mind.

The proposition incidentally made by Gerald Mortimer that, perhaps, Roderick Vanstone was playing him false, bewildered and worried him. He turned the words over in his mind time after time, only to become more bewildered than ever.

But out of the maze of bewilderment there presently sprang a suggestion for clearing the matter up. Another talk with the prisoner would be the way. The thought created the desire, and for the next few hours the lunatic was filled with an overwhelming wish to renew his acquaintance with Gerald Mortimer.

So, as he lay in bed he turned and tossed about, itching to leave his room and seek out Gerald, but, madman though he was, too cunning to run any great risks of discovery.

Fortunately, however, events combined to favour his purpose. For their own reasons, the Vanstones, anxious for as clear a coast as possible that night, had given Ned Stebbings permission to remain away till the next day. To Mark Burge was intrusted the double task of keeping an eye on Mr. Cordelvin and on Gerald Mortimer. A divided duty is often like two stools, calamitous to somebody. Burge, annoyed at the notion of extra work, and his mind full of an unconscious spirit of Trade-Unionism, determined to shirk as much of his duty as he possibly could.

In carrying out his fallacious theory of the relations between Capital and Labour, therefore, he not only did not do extra work, but failed even to perform his usual quantity. It is true in the course of the evening, he bobbed his head in at Mr. Cordelvin's door, to find the cunning madman ostensibly asleep, but really very wide awake indeed. Beyond that, however, he did nothing, unless a steady application to a bottle of whisky can be said to constitute work. To the bottle he certainly did apply himself zealously, with the inevitable result that he got sleepy, and turned over on the couch in his own room, with a strong desire for repose upon him, and no thought whatever of his responsibility.

Cordelvin, on the other hand, remained fully awake, absorbed with his purpose, and watching for an opportunity to put it into effect. After long and weary waiting till about midnight, he presently heard footsteps along the passage, and a minute later the slamming of a door. He was out of bed in a moment and applying his eyes to a chink in the window shutters. The rays of two lanterns danced over the grass outside, and disguised as the men who carried them were with slouched hats, the lunatic had no difficulty in identifying the two figures as those of the Vanstones. Ordinarily his mind might have wobbled in a speculation as to why they carried a pickaxe and other implements, and what could be their business outside at so late an hour. But now no such probings of motives occurred to him. He only knew that they were out of the house, and gathered from that fact that the fulfilment of his own purpose was so much easier.

Not a moment did he lose in slipping on some clothes, and having placed his feet in a pair of soft slippers, he stealthily left his room. The door next to his was slightly ajar. It led into the room in which Burge or Stebbings usually kept watch. The lunatic on tiptoe advanced and peeped in. Seeing the recumbent figure of Burge upon the couch from which issued a series of guttural snores, it occurred to him as an idea of genius to close the door and turn the key. Which he promptly did.

To the door of the room in which the prisoner was confined was not many yards, and Cordelvin, less apprehensive now of any interruption, hurried along the intervening passage. The door of the room was locked, but the key was outside and Cordelvin turned it noiselessly. He opened the door a few inches, and peeped in. The prisoner was there still, lying down, his chin forward on his breast, his eyes staring in dejection before him.

He turned wearily as the door opened, started a little on beholding the unexpected face of Cordelvin, but quietly recovered and raised himself to his feet.

Cordelvin entered, holding up a warning finger for silence. Gerald Mortimer started again as he noticed that his visitor had only one arm. Opportunity for speculation, however, regarding this astounding coincidence with the condition of the murdered man whom he had discovered, there was none. Cordelvin began to speak.

"Hush!" he murmured, "this is irregular for the Lord Mayor to visit a prisoner, but I took it into my head to do so, while the gaolers are away."

As at the previous interview Gerald Mortimer fell at once into the madman's humour and promptly nursed his delusion.

"Welcome, my lord!" he said, with a polite bow, "humble, but hearty welcome. Your lordship will pardon the liberty I take when I say that I *knew* I should get justice at your hands."

Cordelvin cocked his head quaintly on one side as was his habit when pleased by a little flattery. He was about to say something to the point, when another notion jumped into his mind and he inquired:

"How much does it cost to get polar-bear skins from the North Pole?"

With difficulty Gerald restrained his inclination to smile, He must please this poor, demented man, must humour him at all costs. That way alone lay his only chance of getting any assistance.

"Ha!" he said, with the utmost gravity, "you mentioned about those skins to-day, my lord. Now I think, and I'm sure you won't use my statement as evidence against me, that Mr. Vanstone is not treating you squarely over that business."

"Ha!"

"I believe, my lord," Gerald pursued in a confidential undertone, "that Mr. Vanstone is not getting them from the North Pole at all. He's getting them from a furrier's and they're not genuine."

The eyes of the madman rolled angrily as he replied:

"If that turns out true, I'll have his head chopped off."

Gerald saw here a chance.

"I don't ask you to believe me, my lord," he said, "but I've another witness outside this very house."

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"Let him be sent for immediately."

"It's unfortunate my lord, but there's no one to send. It wouldn't be safe to send the gaolers, would it?"

The question and its obvious answer seemed to nonplus the demented man. He stood stock still for several minutes, his poor brain striving to find a solution of the difficulty. At last he seemed to find one. He looked at Gerald sharply and said:

"Couldn't you go and fetch the witness in?"

This was precisely what Gerald had been leading up to, but he knew very well that he must not arouse the lunatic's suspicions by accepting the suggestion too eagerly. So he replied, with a slow and mournful shake of the head:

"I could fetch him of course, and I'd like for your lordship's sake to do so, but you see, my hands are bound. I can't go like this. No, I'm afraid we shall have to wait."

Cordelvin did not reply. Instead he walked behind Gerald, and touched his bound wrists. The other's heart throbbed with hope. Was this lunatic really going to release him? He was certainly fumbling at the knots. But what an unconscionable time he was. Beads of perspiration stood on the brow of the impatient Gerald. Handicapped as the lunatic was by the loss of a hand, he could not manage the cords readily. Yet he stuck tenaciously to his task for full twenty minutes, till at last, Oh joy! the first knot gave.

Gerald's heart jumped in his breast as he realised that each moment now took him nearer to freedom. As the loosened cords fell from his aching wrists, he suppressed with difficulty an exclamation of joy, and said in a trembling voice, "Now I will go for the witness!"

He started to leave the room as he spoke, but a sudden sound as of the opening and shutting of another door arrested his footsteps.

A moment later he heard a voice cry:

"Burge, Burge, where are you? Get warm water at once and bathe my father's eyes. Do you hear, Burge? Where the dickens are you?"

The Vanstones had returned and to Gerald came immediately the thought that any attempt to escape meant a fierce fight. The noise outside continued, the voices now being interlarded by the turning of a key and the violent throwing open of a door. Stephen Vanstone had discovered Burge's plight and had released him. A moment later and they had acquainted themselves with the absence of Cordelvin from his room, and a speedy scurry towards the room where Gerald was ensued.

Gerald heard them coming, heard the double sound of heavy footsteps. In a moment he had decided what to do. Taking his stand near the door, he waited a moment. Then as the door was quickly thrown open, his clenched fists shot full into the face of Stephen Vanstone, placing him *hors de combat* for the moment. Over his prostrate body Gerald leapt, but at that moment he came into such violent collision with Mark Burge that both were brought heavily to the ground.

Unfortunately, from the awkwardness of his fall, Gerald was slow to recover himself. He was about to rise when the semi-drunken Burge, who, by a miracle, had managed to scramble to his feet first, pounced down upon him. The two struggled on the ground, Gerald managing to get a grip of his assailant's throat. So effective was this grip that in another moment he would have thrown Burge off, but in that moment Stephen Vanstone, having now recovered himself, rushed in, and with a short heavy stick dealt him a fearful blow on his head. The grasp of Gerald Mortimer relaxed, his head fell back and he sank to the floor unconscious.

CHAPTER XX.

What the Detective's Search Revealed.

Having obtained a glimpse of the woman's eyes, Detective-inspector Trench was satisfied immediately that she answered exactly the description given of her by Gerald Mortimer to Dr. Branksome, and detailed by the latter to the officer himself. At a discreet distance he followed the woman down the Brixton Road, through diverse side roads until finally she stopped and entered a big block of flats off the Clapham Road.

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Noticing from the sudden appearance of a light that she lived on the second floor, the officer soon afterwards hailed a cab and drove home, fairly well satisfied with his evening's work.

"I'm on the right track now, I think," he murmured to himself, "and the first job to-morrow will be to see Mr. Mortimer and bring him face to face with this woman for identification purposes."

But in the morning as Inspector Trench sat looking over the papers after breakfast, he was destined to receive a surprise. While glancing over the headings, his eye was arrested by the following:

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF A BARRISTER.
FOUL PLAY SUSPECTED.

"Considerable anxiety is being felt in the Temple and elsewhere at the unaccountable disappearance of Mr. Gerald Mortimer, barrister-at-law. Particulars of the case are very meagre at present, but it has transpired that late on Thursday evening Mr. Mortimer was seen to leave Middle Temple Lane in company with a short stout man, obviously one of the working class. Since then nothing has been seen or heard of the missing barrister. It is feared in some quarters that Mr. Mortimer has been the victim of foul play."

Inspector Trench laid down the paper with a gasp. Then he hurriedly rose, put on his coat and hat and at once made his way to Scotland Yard.

Very little information could he glean from his colleagues there. Mr. Mortimer had been seen by the gate-keeper to leave the Temple and enter a four-wheeler in company with a strange man. That was all they knew. There had been nothing startling or suspicious in the occurrence, and the gate-keeper had taken but little notice.

Inspector Trench's brow contracted. The mystery which he was trying to elucidate, was deepening. Last night he seemed to be in a fair way to discover something in connection with the woman in the blue cloak. Now, his principal means of identifying her as the person seen hanging about in the neighbourhood of Moulstone Asylum, had gone. Obviously the disappearance of Mr. Mortimer was bound up with the murder of Felix Cordelvin, but in what way? He must follow the woman up now. It was the most promising clue he had. And a good idea would be to get Dr. Branksome up to town. He might possibly know something more of the woman than he had communicated. In any case, as a close friend of Gerald Mortimer, he might be of some service in connection with the latter's disappearance.

At half-past two that afternoon Dr. Branksome arrived at Charing Cross. Inspector Trench was there to meet him, having spent the morning in making a few inquiries in the neighbourhood of Bowenden Mansions, Clapham, where the strange woman lived, and in setting a plain-clothes constable to watch her movements.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Branksome," the inspector said, "to have had to bring you up to town, but I thought perhaps you might be able to assist me. You mentioned, when I last saw you, something about Mr. Mortimer having met a strange woman?"

"Yes," responded the doctor, "I did. Mortimer met her late on the night preceding the escape of Felix Cordelvin. She was an oldish woman, he said, with strange-looking eyes, and a faded blue cloak. Have you any news of her?"

"I believe I have found her," replied the detective calmly, "I stumbled across her quite by accident late last night." And he forthwith gave the doctor a brief account of the incident. The doctor listened with the keenest interest.

"Do you suspect her of the murder?" he asked. "And do you think she has something to do with the disappearance of poor Mortimer?"

The detective evaded the question.

"I know too little as yet to decide definitely," he replied, "but I want you to see this woman, Dr. Branksome."

"I'm ready to do whatever you like to assist in clearing up this mystery," the doctor said.

"Very good, then. We'll take a cab over to Clapham now."

The plain-clothes constable reported when they arrived that the woman in the blue cloak was at present indoors

"But she's been out all the morning, sir," he explained to the inspector, "she took a cab to Streatham Hill, and spent nearly two hours walking up and down and looking at an old house that lies back off the high road, sir."

The inspector exchanged a quick glance with the doctor.

"What's more, sir," the plain-clothes man resumed, "she ordered the cabman to be back here again at half-past three."

"Half-past three!" echoed the detective glancing at his watch, "why, it's nearly that now. Very well, Jennings"—to the constable—"you keep your eye on her and follow her again. I may be about here when you return. If not, I will send a relief on for you, and you can then come on to the Yard and report to me."

The inspector drew the doctor aside, and talked quietly with him. About a quarter of an hour later an empty cab turned round the corner, and halted outside the block of flats.

"Now then, Dr. Branksome," the inspector said, "that's her cab I expect. We'd better move slowly up to get a good sight of the woman when she comes out."

They walked along towards the spot where the cab stood. The cabman had entered the flats, and now reappeared and mounted his box. Immediately afterwards a female figure appeared attired in a blue cloak.

"There she is!" whispered the detective, and the two quickened their steps.

As they drew abreast of the cab, the woman had just taken her seat. The two men got a full view of her face.

Neither said anything. They stood watching the cab as it rolled away, followed quickly by another with Jennings inside. Not till the two vehicles had disappeared round the corner, did the detective glance at his companion. When he did he was startled. Dr. Branksome had gone as white as a sheet.

"Good Heavens, man!" the officer exclaimed, "What is the matter? You look as if you had seen a ghost."

The doctor pulled himself together.

"Excuse me, inspector," he said in a voice that trembled with agitation, "but for the moment I thought I had seen a ghost!"

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I mean," responded Dr. Branksome slowly and decisively, "that that woman is the living image of Felix Cordelvin!"

For a full minute the two stood regarding one another in silence, amazement showing on both their faces.

The detective was the first to speak.

"What do you make of it, doctor?" he asked.

Dr. Branksome shook his head.

"It is beyond me," he said, "but the likeness is wonderful. The same colour hair, the same nose and mouth, above all the same extraordinary eyes. But for the difference of skin texture, I could almost have sworn it was Felix Cordelvin come to life again."

The detective paused a moment. Then he said: "Dr. Branksome, what you say has confirmed me in my theory that this woman is the sister of Felix Cordelvin."

"His sister! why I never knew he had any relatives."

"Well, he had. I have discovered so from inquiries made in various quarters. He had a sister and he had a cousin. This woman is his sister—Ruth Cordelvin, beyond a doubt. The cousin is Anthony Cordelvin who lives on Streatham Hill."

"Anthony Cordelvin! Why, that is the name that Felix used to claim."

"So I've been told. But he had no right to it. It is his cousin's name. From what I understand, Anthony Cordelvin had a lot of money left him, while Felix who expected some of it, went off in a huff to Australia followed by his sister. Felix was always a mad-headed irresponsible person, and the disappointment in his expectations probably preyed on his mind till he became insane. Insanity apparently is somewhat common in the family."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, you know of the extraordinary behaviour of the sister. As for the cousin Anthony Cordelvin, he seems almost as mentally incapable as was Felix."

"Have you seen Anthony?"

"No, not at present. I have only lately got on to this

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branch of the inquiry. He is under the care of a solicitor named Roderick Vanstone, who is sole administrator of the estate during Anthony Cordelvin's life."

"Who is the next heir?"

"Miss Nina Penhurst."

"What, the girl who was governess at Moulstone Manor?"

"The same. I will explain all about that later on. I propose in a day or two to accompany her to see Anthony Cordelvin. As heir to the property she has right of access to him you know."

Both were silent after that, each busy with his own thoughts. Presently Inspector Trench looked up at the window of Ruth Cordelvin's flat.

"I've a good mind to risk it!" he murmured half aloud.

"Risk what?" inquired the doctor.

"Why, risk doing a bit of house-breaking. I've no search-warrant, and it's against regulations of course, but I would like to examine those rooms up there, while she's away. However, I've no wish to drag you into it."

"But how would you manage it?"

"Very easily. Ruth Cordelvin—or Miss Richardson as she calls herself here—lives alone. I found that out this morning. And I've got a key that will open her door. Yes, and by Jove! I'll have a look at her rooms. I may not get another such opportunity. Will you wait here for me?"

"No, I will come with you."

"All right, only don't if you'd rather not."

"Oh, I'll take the risk. Like you, I believe the end will justify the means."

"Then come along!" and the two men passed into the building.

They had little difficulty in finding the door they wanted. The name of "Miss Richardson," painted in black letters, showed them plainly which it was. The detective's key quite fulfilled his expectations.

It was a small sitting-room in which they found themselves, furnished very plainly with a table and chairs, and a writing desk in the corner.

"I should like to see inside this," remarked Inspector Trench, trying a drawer of the desk. "But I haven't a key to fit, and it wouldn't do to burst the lock. Let's have a glance at the other rooms."

They passed into the kitchen, but found nothing suspicious there. The bedroom alone remained to be visited. Their cursory examination of that room at first promised to be as unyielding of anything in the shape of a tangible clue, as the other apartments.

Inspector Trench over in a corner pulled open the door of a cupboard. It was growing dusk, and to discern what was inside was a difficult matter. The dim outline of what looked like a big glass jar caught his eye. He struck a match and peered at it closely.

Then from his lips there broke a startled cry. The match had gone out, and he did not strike another. The doctor, attracted by the cry, was by his side in a moment.

"What is it?" he demanded, "What have you found?"

"Find a candle, or a lamp or something," ordered the detective peremptorily, "we must have a light. Find one in the kitchen."

Like a child obeying its parent, the doctor darted away. Presently he returned with a candle. He struck a match and lighted it. The inspector had closed the cupboard door, and stood holding the handle.

The doctor gazed mutely at him for a moment. Then he said:

"Inspector, you have found something. What is it?"

The detective was silent for a second or two. Then at length he spoke.

"Yes, doctor," he said slowly, "I have found something. Something more in your line of business than mine. I've found a glass jar such as I've seen in museums. It's full of a coloured liquid and there's something else in it which may not shock you quite as much as it did me, you doubtless having seen such things before. Doctor, bring the candle and look."

Wonderingly, the doctor did as he was bid. The detective pulled open the cupboard door. The doctor peered in.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, aghast, and started back a step.

"Dr. Branksome!" said the detective, "I am wondering if my eyes deceived me. What is in that jar?"

The doctor replied from a dry throat.

"That is an arm!" he said, "a man's amputated arm!"

The inspector's eyes looked away from the cupboard.

"That's what I thought," he said. "A man's arm!" Then he added in a low voice. "And Felix Cordelvin was discovered with his arm cut off."

The doctor nodded.

"Then," said the officer. "Ruth Cordelvin must be arrested to-night!"

(To be continued.)

Drying the Candles.

"How came such a greasy mess in the oven?" asked a fidgety old spinster of Bridget. "Why," replied the girl, "the candles fell into the wather and I put them into the oven to dry."

She Liked Spelling.

A VISITOR was chatting with the little daughter of the family. "What do you study at school?" he asked. "Readin' an' writin' an' 'rithmetic an' spellin'." "Well, well. What a bright little girl you are. And which study do you like best?" "Spellin'." "Indeed. Most children do not. Why do you like spelling?" "'Cause every time I spell a word the teacher laughs."

Cause for Thankfulness.

A POOR old woman who had just seen the ocean for the first time, was asked by her son: "What do you think of the sea?" "Think," replied the old dame, after a long pause. "I can't think, Jim, I can only thank Providence for having shown me something in my life of which there seems to be enough and to spare."

Handwriting as an Index to Character

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[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

What is Disparity of Age?

My correspondents' troubles seem to work on a system of waves, as each week a problem arises which seems to be in the ascendency over all others. This week it is as above. "J. M." (Barry) is thirty-five years of age, and tells me that from motives of expediency he contemplates an alliance with a girl of sixteen. He asks me if such a marriage would end unhappily.

❦

I do not wish to be a pessimist, but I cannot sympathise with the proposal. Even under ordinary circumstances, a man cannot hope for happiness in marriage when he candidly confesses his motive to be expediency. Particularly is this the case with "J. M.," who is undoubtedly courting trouble.

❦

A girl of sixteen could scarcely have a natural affection for a man so much older than herself. Unless she is a very original young lady, her ideal must be towards a younger man, though at the time she may not know it. The danger is that after a year or so of married life this ideal will be awakened, and she will unconsciously find herself face to face with the man she would have loved had she waited a year or so. What terrible mischief results from such a development is, alas, too well known to need reference. No, "J. M.," if you want my advice, go no further in this matter, unless the girl is really devoted to you, and sufficiently unlike other girls as to be indifferent to the attractions of younger men.

❦

It Depends on the Ages.

Now in the case of "C. G." and several other correspondents, the disparity of age referred to above, is not a serious factor. "C. G." is twenty and loves a man of thirty. This is a very different state of affairs. Though it would be much more poetic, perhaps, if "C. G.'s," amour were a youth, on practical grounds, the man of thirty will probably make her the better husband, and, after all, a man is young at thirty. He is more likely to have an assured position in life and to be able to give her a good home. So, "C. G.," don't bother about any disparity of age if you both love each other.

❦

Now I come to another aspect of the same question. In this case it is the man who is six years younger than the girl, though R. D. A., who asks my advice on the question, does not say what are their ages. I know of a young man who, at twenty-three, married a girl of twenty-eight, and their married life after two years is of an almost ideal character. As I have often pointed out, there are many men, as also women, whose affections are more likely to go out to those older than themselves than to those younger, and in such cases, I have very rarely encountered any but the happiest results.

❦

Trials of a Youthful Hostess.

I am sorry for you, "Winnie," but the little trials of housekeeping and entertaining during your mother's absence will do you no harm in the long run. After all, you have your "hair up," haven't you, and all you want is to be amiable and dignified, and as tactful as you can be, and you will please people entirely. You made a mistake when some visitors called the other day in leaving the introductions to be done by your brother. As representing your mother, you should have assumed the duties, even though he is much older than you. Yes, always introduce the gentleman to the lady, and don't confine your conversation to any particular guest, but try and get a word in with everybody.

❦

A girl who is entertaining on behalf of her mother should for once drop the demureness imposed on her on other occasions. She must try and lead the conversation to the best of her ability, even if she is inexperienced in the gentle art of small talk. People would rather follow the lead of ever so young a hostess than sit embarrassed and silent. So, "Winnie," next time any guests call talk about something, no matter if you have to descend to asking people if they have heard "The Honeysuckle and the Bee," or if they play ping-pong. As time goes on you will soon drop into the technique of talking, and may as well start as early as possible.

❦

Should They Have Played Games?

Talking about entertaining, a married correspondent, "Alice R." (Warwick), tells me that she gave a party the other day to her husband's business friends and their wives, but things fell terribly flat, in spite of all her efforts to make them enjoy themselves. It afterwards occurred to her whether she should not have provided some games for her guests. She would have done so, only a friend of hers had given a most successful party recently without them and she thought she would do the same.

❦

If people know each other very well, "Alice R.," and you have some music, games are not only unnecessary but often regarded as rather an infliction by people who would prefer to talk to each other. But when in your case you brought together several people who I imagine knew each other very slightly, and possibly were not very musical, I think you ought to have anticipated what happened, and arranged for progressive whist, or some other card game which you should have stated on your invitation card. My advice to hostesses is to endeavour to bring together people of similar tastes and try and interest the right persons in each other. This is, after all, the most enjoyable kind of gathering, as there are few things more distressing than to have to "make" conversation with people one does not know and will possibly not meet again.

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.

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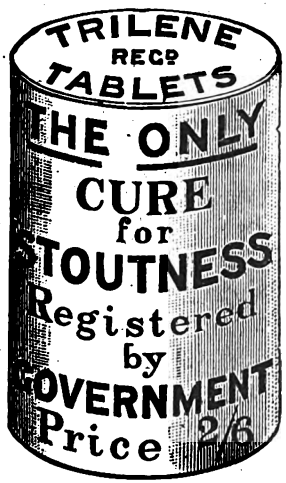

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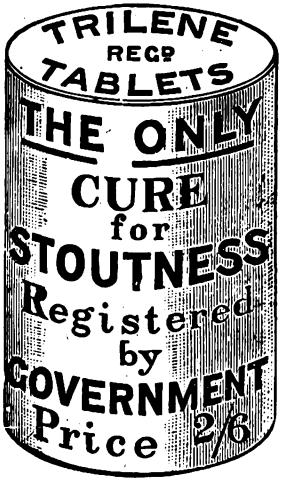

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risebolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weigh was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 23 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mr. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. E. ALEXANDER, 102 Dixon Street, New Swindon, says: "They have reduced me quite 2 stone, and I am now quite cured."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 63 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

Mrs. DREW, of 1 Bellevue Gardens, The Nursery, Devizes, writes: "I took Tablets some years ago; they soon reduced me and I have not got stout since Send me a box for my mother."

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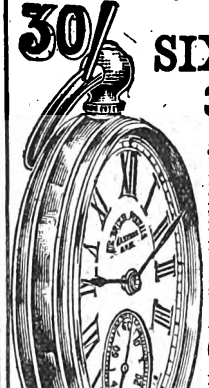

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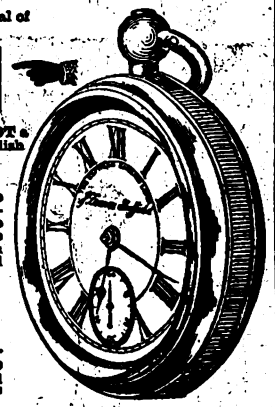

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SHORT STORIES

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THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Mysteries by R. NORMAN SILVER.

THE WOMAN AT THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

Dr. Shand of B Division.

"'ROSE COTTAGE, Pike's Hill.' Well, by Jove, I thought I knew division B. like the palm of my own hand, but it appears I flattered myself! This is Pike's Hill, right enough, yet I'll be hanged if I can discover anything approaching to roses or rusticity."

Lucius Shand tilted his square-crowned felt hat to one side as he stood and pulled thoughtfully at the lobe of a large, well-shaped ear. He had halted near the top of a long, roughly-paved, sharply-inclined thoroughfare; beneath him, spread out in a crowded and very smoky panorama, lay three-fourths of the division to which he had referred. A scorching summer sun poured down its rays upon him, making the surgeon's moist brow and cheeks as red as his auburn hair.

Behind and about him were the tall, untidy mansions of a decaying suburb, once the best residential district of the town. Even in its present dilapidated condition it was sleepily respectable. There were but few shops in its immediate neighbourhood and—the afternoon still being young and the children of the locality yet at school—its broad, sultry roadways were practically deserted.

The divisional surgeon frowned, for he was wasting his time, and the fact annoyed him.

"Dash it!" he murmured; "why couldn't they have given me a fuller address?" He drew from the breast-pocket of his frock-coat a printed document, with blank spaces arranged for filling in—a letter was attached, a letter in a bold, clerkly script. "'Rose Cottage, Pike's Hill,'" repeated Lucius Shand, disgustedly; "not a word more, and there can't be fewer than a thousand houses in Pike's Hill. I suppose I must appeal to the nearest post-office."

He was about to descend the slope before him when a heavy tread sounded hard by and he perceived, stalking deliberately through the torrid sunshine, a constable, with the divisional letter B. upon his numbered collar. The striped armlet on his sleeve showed that he was upon duty. At sight of the surgeon he saluted.

Lucius Shand went towards him and bade him a cheerful, half-irritable, good-day—there was scarcely a member of the force in the division who was not known to the surgeon.

"See here," he added, "can you tell me of a Rose Cottage in these parts, or have I been sent on a wild-goose chase by those mummies at headquarters?"

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The other started: He was a burly Yorkshireman, with a shrewd, bronzed countenance.

"Rose Cottage, sir!" he observed, reflectively; "excuse my mentioning it, but I fancy that'll be about a report of mine. Rose Cottage, sir, is at the back of yonder brick wall—the one with the small door and the high wooden gates in it."

The constable raised a muscular, blue-coated arm to point obliquely across the hilly roadway and down a drowsy-looking street which adjoined it. For quite a third of its length it was bordered by the wall indicated.

"There used to be an inscription on the door till lately," Lucius Shand was informed, "you can't see the house from the outside—it's a little white villa, with a fairly sizable piece of ground about it, lawns and shrubberies and that sort of thing."

"Indeed," said the surgeon, "and what may your report about Rose Cottage have been?"

The other came closer to his questioner and answered in the peculiar husky tones affected by the police when in a confidential mood.

"It was about the lunatic they keep shut up there," came the reply, "or rather try to, for last week he got out and a fine chase they had after him. A slim chap, sir, with close-cropped hair and a suit of flannels; talks fast and excitedly. In charge of a quiet, black-moustached gentleman who told me he was a doctor. I helped to get him back to the cottage, me and some rough fellows who were with the doctor—I understand they were kind of attendants on the lunatic. I reported the affair, sir, and not having ever heard that Rose Cottage was licensed for such purposes, I wondered, when you asked for the place, if you were calling officially. Pardon the liberty, sir."

Lucius Shand made a friendly gesture. "Don't mention it," he said, "I always like to be well-informed."

"Quite so, sir," assented the constable, respectfully, "in that case, perhaps I might add that people do say in the neighbourhood that the poor beggar's weakness takes the form of burrowing in the ground about wherever he happens to live. Something like the famous Duke of Portland, sir. It's thought he's rich, or his relatives are, and these attendants of his are believed to be working-men, who carry out, in a sort of way, his half-witted plans. It seems he's afraid of someone or other and wants to have his underground passages to hide in. At least, so the story goes."

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The divisional surgeon put into his pocket the document he had mechanically retained in his fingers.

"Thanks," he reponded, "that's very interesting. And now I'll get on to Rose Cottage itself. Good afternoon."

The constable saluted again and Lucius Shand, the irritable expression that had been contracting on his sensitive features succeeded by one of anticipation, returned the salute abstractedly. Then he strode to the further side of the sloping thoroughfare, gained the by-street, and paused at the low, nail-studded door of which his guide had spoken. It was flanked by a couple of lofty wooden gates, solid, and sown with spikes on their upper edges.

For some time the surgeon waited and finally a bolt was shot back within. The door opened and Lucius Shand saw a narrow alley, floored by asphalte and screened by arched trellises, overgrown with dusty creeper. To the left he distinguished a spacious garden, to the right a weedy, disused stable-yard. At the extremity of the railed alley rose up a white stucco-fronted block with huge awkward gables. It was the much-discussed Rose Cottage.

On the threshold of the newly-opened door stood a woman, dark, youthful, and not without a certain species of stern, almost sombre beauty. Her face had a singular pallor in it—of sickness or alarm; her eyes suggested the latter. She was simply dressed and her sleeves were rolled up to the elbow as if she had been engaged in some domestic task.

"What do you want?" she said abruptly. Her voice trembled. Lucius Shand gave her a card.

"I wish to see the person in authority here," he answered; "I am informed that it is a Dr. Lorimer."

The woman stepped back, regarding him keenly. "Will you come in?" she requested. The surgeon entered the narrow avenue. As he did so, she closed the door behind him and locked it. This accomplished, she led him forward and through a second door into the house at the end of the green alley. Ushering him as far as a scantily furnished parlour on the same level, she left him alone.

Lucius Shand, according to his wont, had taken a rapid, exhaustive, unostentatious inventory of her appearance. Sinking into a saddle-bag armchair by the fireless hearth of the apartment, he reflected that, if physiognomy counted for anything, the woman of whom he had been permitted so brief a glimpse was a character of rare force and determination. Brown-haired, brown-eyed, with a Greek profile and a thin-lipped, resentful mouth, she was a creature to linger in the memory of a man such as the divisional surgeon. He leant back, lost in a sudden reverie.

An odd noise disturbed him—a noise absurdly slight, yet loud enough in the silence that surrounded him. It was crisp and crackling—he had seated himself upon something responsible for the sound and he moved hastily. In a corner of the cushioned chair was a crumpled scrap of paper; he plucked it from under him to fling it into the grate.

There was that about it that arrested his attention. He hesitated, then smoothed it out and sat pondering it. It was blank. He held it up to the light, fingered it, and slowly folding it, put it into his vest pocket. His brows knitted and he pulled at the lobe of his ear—a favourite sign of perplexity.

An instant later the door of the room was flung wide and there marched in a tall, vigorous personage, high-collared, frock-coated, affable. He, too, was dark, with brown hair and eyes; it would not have surprised Lucius Shand to learn that there was a tie of blood between him and the only other occupant of Rose Cottage whom the divisional surgeon had encountered.

"Dr. Shand," he said, "delighted to meet you. I am Dr. Lorimer—Dr. William Lorimer, of New York. To what do I owe this visit on the part of one of my professional brethren?"

Lucius Shand got up to bow. "I have a magistrate's order," he returned stiffly, "to examine and report on a person kept here in restraint and supposedly of unsound mind—I am, of course, a physician as well as a surgeon, though I have not the mystic L.S.A. on my card."

The American smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "An English legal formality, I presume," he observed. "Well, my dear sir, my patient and I are quite at your service. He is Mr. Andrew Millican, a gentleman afflicted with delusions of a more or less permanent nature, and he has been intrusted to my care by a wealthy relative. I will bring him to you at once—he is, at this moment, docile, but has been, of late, unusually restless. I must ask you to avoid exciting him as much as possible."

The divisional surgeon murmured a few polite phrases of assent and, with an equally polite apology for his temporary absence, the American departed. When he was alone, Lucius Shand took from his vest pocket the piece of cracking paper which he had secreted, and re-inspected it carefully.

CHAPTER II.

The Tunnels at Rose Cottage.

"You are wasting my time, I say; wasting my time! Why will you not let me get on with my work? I am making the new one fine and deep—they will never unearth me, I promise you! But I must finish it quickly; yes, and others too, the more the better."

The words penetrated to Lucius Shand's ear a second or two before the speaker appeared. The latter was a slender, excitable-looking man, evidently still young, with closely-cropped hair, pale grey pupils, and a suit of flannels, not unlike a cricketing outfit. The American led him persuasively.

"This is Mr. Millican,—er—er, Mr. Shand," he remarked, winking at the surgeon confidentially, and laying a slight emphasis on the non-professional title he had given his visitor. "I have told him you are a friend of mine and that you wish particularly to make his acquaintance. But he is very busy."

"Busy!" cried the other, "of course I'm busy. But if he's a friend of yours, Lorimer, he shall come into my tunnels with you when they get here."

"When who get here, Mr. Millican?" interpolated Lucius Shand, with a friendly air; he was studying covertly the slight twitching figure.

Andrew Millican lowered his voice to a sibilant, important tone. "The Medes and Persians," he said, "oh, they are coming, though no one will believe me, except Lorimer. Even the workmen laugh at me. But one of these days it will be I who will laugh; oh, yes! When I am safely hidden, and Lorimer and you Mr.—Mr. whoever you are, and we listen to them tramping, tramping over our heads, then I shall laugh and you may laugh, too, if you choose."

"Perhaps," observed the American, in an aside to the surgeon; "you would prefer that I should retire and leave you to examine him alone?" And he made as if to slip from the apartment. Andrew Millican darted after him.

"That's right!" he exclaimed; "back to work, back to work! We must not be idle, we must push on. S—s—sh! my voices have warned me that it will be soon now—the ships are being built to carry them over—hundreds and hundreds of ships, they are afraid there won't be enough after all. The Medes will come first, then the Persians. But we shall be hidden—hidden away in the dark and they will never know. S—s—sh!"

He turned to Lucius Shand and waved an earth-stained hand. "You are Lorimer's friend," he said, "you shall see my tunnels. But you must not tell anyone outside—they are all mad, too mad to be afraid of the Medes and Persians. My workmen are mad, every one of them, and would you believe it"—he doubled himself up with laughter—"they think it is I who am mad, not them? But they'll know who was mad when the Medes and Persians come."

Again he motioned invitingly to the surgeon and hastened out. The American—after an inquiring glance—held the door for Lucius Shand and they passed out together.

"A sad case," commented the surgeon's companion, twisting his black moustache; "overstudy did it. His health obstinately refused to mend—it had broken down completely—so long as he was prevented from digging and burrowing. His brother, a well-to-do City merchant, met me and mentioned the young fellow's affliction. I advocated quite a different

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treatment and the end of it was I am established here in a quiet place where he can excavate all he wants to."

The American was piloting his visitor along a short corridor, at the extremity of which was an open door leading into the garden.

"I have even," added the American, "provided some steady men to assist him—they keep an eye on his doings and help to entertain him by operating on elaborate plans of his own. His health is fast becoming robust and I am not without hopes of ultimately effecting a cure. Even a recent outbreak of violence—during which he temporarily escaped from our charge—is not, as you know, a bad sign; the darkest hour and the proverbial dawn."

there by lanterns. A labourer was wheeling forth from it a barrowload of earth, to be added to a vast mound, which had been built up in a series of terraces at the further side of the intervening shubbery. Into this tunnel the American's patient was already disappearing.

Lucius Shand followed the former into the excavation. Mr. Lorimer unhooked a lantern to guide him more assiduously and proceeded to pilot the surgeon from one part to another of a miniature catacomb. It had been obviously driven under almost the whole extent of the garden of Rose Cottage, and possibly, Lucius Shand calculated, under the streets beyond.

At the end of the newest working, in a gloom illuminated merely by a couple of oil-lamps, Andrew Millican was super-

She had stolen out into the garden, and was peering at him through the greenery.

"It is sometimes so," agreed Lucius Shand, politely. "As for my presence at the instigation of the authorities, I suppose you have omitted to secure the proper license for a single-patient house. You will receive a similar visit from another medical man, and afterwards, I imagine, a summons. But the magistrate will be most lenient to an inadvertent illegality. You will probably be bound over in your own recognisances on condition of putting the matter right immediately."

He was talking with a frank, good-tempered demeanour and his usual pronounced Irish accent. They had stepped out into the garden of the villa and were crossing the lawn.

An expression of relief sprang into the American's lean, astute face, he thanked the surgeon cordially as they went amicably down a gravel path towards a screened corner of the garden, where there yawned, sloping into the deep subsoil and underlying the native rock, a species of tunnel. It was propped and timbered in workmanlike style and lit here and

vising the labours of some three or four men, who grinned at each other as they lounged over their task.

"Nice and expensive!" murmured the American to the surgeon; "but his people say 'Spare nothing to make him happy—let alone cure him.'"

Lucius Shand stood to contemplate the odd spectacle; Andrew Millican noticed him and laughed childishly. "We are getting on, you see, Mr. Thingamy," he cried; "we'll be in time for the M's and P's—eh?" he laid his finger on his lip with a warning gesture, and, catching up a spade, began to fill the barrow that had just been brought back.

Dr. Lorimer touched the surgeon on the shoulder. "Like to return to the open air," he asked, "it's a trifle stuffy underground, don't you think?"

Lucius Shand assented, and, aided by the American's guiding light and the occasional wan glow of the dangling lanterns, regained the sunlit garden above. Lorimer laughed

as he brushed the loose earth from his companion's costume.

"I'm afraid my patient's mud-pies have rather messed you up, Dr. Shand," he said. "Well, I trust you have seen all you want to."

The surgeon nodded reflectively. "I believe so, Dr. Lorimer," he answered, "yes, I believe I have. Pray accept my thanks for your courtesy."

"Pleasure, I assure you, Doctor," responded the American, and he set down his lantern and escorted his visitor through the house to the bolted exit. As the latter stepped down the narrow railed aisle, his keen glance, travelling this way and that with graceful ease, perceived once more the woman with the dark brows and the rolled-up sleeves. She had stolen out into the garden and was peering at him through the greenery. The surgeon felt that her expression had in it the same stern, resentful anxiety as before.

He took the most affable farewell possible of the American and strode away townwards. Not until he was a quarter of a mile distant did he pause again and draw from his pocket the piece of paper he had picked up in the parlour of Rose Cottage.

CHAPTER III.

"From Information Received."

"It's neck or nothing, sergeant, as far as my reputation's concerned, and yet I'm sure I'm not mistaken. However, if I'm wrong the Superintendent can only laugh at me. Where are your men?"

Lucius Shand slipped a small dark-lantern from his pocket as he asked the question, struck a match and lighted it. He was crouching in the shadow of the substantial brick wall that surrounded Rose Cottage. A sultry summer midnight brooded over the Pike's Hill district. By him stood a sturdy figure in the garments of a civilian.

"All within sound of the whistle, sir," was the answer to the surgeon's inquiry; "I myself shall stay here till you come back or summon us."

"Very good," said Lucius Shand, hiding the dark lantern in one of the cavernous recesses of his ulster, "and now you can give me a leg up."

He put the instep of one foot on the offered palm of the detective-sergeant and clung to the wall. The officer straightened himself and the surgeon, gaining the top of the brick slip, dropped into the garden beyond. As he reached it, a deep-mouthed bay split the air and there was the distant rattle of a chain.

Lucius Shand muttered a vigorous Irish curse on the canine guardian of Rose Cottage, and, stooping down, detached from a button on the inside of his ulster a short thick club. It was a blackthorn cudgel—a true shillalah, as hard as steel and balanced with rare science. Such a weapon, swung through its own length, will gain force enough to fracture a skull. The divisional surgeon looped it on his wrist by its thong.

Gliding from point to point he attained in safety the singular burrow of the Rose Cottage monomaniac, and crept within. The lanterns had been extinguished and the tunnels were in profound obscurity. Going down on his hands and knees, the surgeon followed a devious course. Soon he began to probe cautiously at the floor of the burrow.

Some moments later he paused—his fingers had encountered a resisting substance that was not earth or rock, but wood—wood bolted with iron.

"Here must be where it seemed to ring hollow under my feet this afternoon," muttered Lucius Shand, and he produced his dark lantern, to twist the slide a fraction—a ray of yellow light fell across the gloom.

Before him was exposed, in the floor of the tunnel, a square of stout timber, fitting stoutly into a frame equally stout; a mass of loose mould and fragments of rock had been swept from off it and lay about it. The surgeon got out a bulky knife, chose a powerful prier, forced it into the crack between the trap-door and the frame and bore on it cautiously.

The block lifted slightly and he was able to hear the murmur of human speech and the roll and click of machinery. The latter sounds were significant—they were those of a printing-press.

Among the voices which came to him, recognisably enough, though their words were almost indistinguishable, was that of the American Lorimer, and that of the singular being for whom the Medes and Persians possessed such an extraordinary fascination. Lucius Shand nodded, as if satisfied with his discovery, released his tool, pocketed his knife, closed his dark lantern, and crept back to the mouth of the tunnel.

Reaching the exit he stepped out into the open air, filled his lungs, lifted to his lips a regulation whistle, and would have blown a call. But something glittering passed before his vision and touched him, coldly, menacingly, on the temple.

"Stop!" he was told, in feminine accents, tremulous yet determined, "or you are a dead man."

Lucius Shand glanced from a corner of his eye and beheld the woman whom he had first seen a few hours earlier. She was levelling a nickel-plated revolver, her finger on the trigger. The surgeon smiled.

"Excuse my not raising my hat to a lady," he said cheerfully, "but you might mistake the object of the movement, and I should just like you to note a last message or two. Give my kind regards to Detective-Sergeant Williamson, who is outside in charge of a body of police. Ask him also to remember me to the superintendent. My will is at the Union Bank and I am insured in the Law Life Association. Please mention this to Williamson. You will have an opportunity immediately, for when I blow this whistle, as I am about to do, you will all be promptly arrested. The house and garden is surrounded and no one can possibly escape, either yourself or the gentlemen in the underground printing-works. Whether I succeed in whistling or not, your shot will summon my colleagues. So, good-bye."

At the conclusion of which lengthy and phlegmatic speech the surgeon lifted the whistle again towards his lips.

A dozen expressions—of amazement, incredulity, reluctant admiration—had been chasing one another across his captor's face. She hesitated.

"Let me think," she faltered; "give me a minute." The surgeon acquiesced, the whistle poised an inch from his moustache.

"You—you can't want to die!" said the other at length, "what if I make a proposal?"

"Make it," responded Lucius Shand, calmly.

The woman drew a deep breath.

"I must—I will," she answered, "save one man, my husband—Andrew Millican. He is down there with the rest. Will you let me call him out and get him away? You shall have all but him."

"I have told you," said the surgeon, "that the house and garden is surrounded and that no one could escape. But since your husband is mad, the law will not seek to punish him." There was an inflection of satire in Lucius Shand's tones.

"Fool!" retorted the other, "my husband is not mad. The idea of getting him to seem so as a blind to our—our doings, is my uncle's, the man who calls himself Dr. Lorimer. He taught Andrew to sham lunacy. The mock 'escape' last week was only to give the neighbours a safe view of our proceedings. Come, is it a bargain?—if not, I will shoot you and take my chance of getting them all away before your comrades can arrive. You wouldn't be the first man I've dropped—I was bred out West, when life was cheaper there than now, I nearly shot you when I saw you get over the wall in the moonlight. I thought it was you—I've suspected you all along."

The surgeon made a gesture of resignation. "You have my word," he said; "unlock that toy and give it to me, though."

Mrs. Andrew Millican obeyed reluctantly, and, putting her in front of him, the surgeon re-entered the tunnel, guiding her by his dark lantern—he had tossed the revolver into the distant shrubbery. At the trap-door his companion knelt

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down and raised it by a lever Lucius Shand had not noticed. The sound of the machinery and the voices became clearer.

"Andrew," she called, "come and take the dog off the chain for me. He's restless and barks a lot—there may be someone prowling about. He won't let me, and you're the only one that can manage him."

There was a shout below, a grumbled reply, and a man began to mount a ladder-stair. It was Andrew Millican, the sham lunatic. Lucius Shand backed into a side tunnel and watched them in the light that streamed from the trap. A moment they talked together, then the door was lowered, he heard a sound of footsteps, and there ensued a sudden silence. The surgeon leant out into the main tunnel and cast the rays of his lantern to and fro—the "lunatic" and his wife had vanished.

Shrugging his shoulders, Lucius Shand ran into the garden above and blew his whistle. Instantly half a dozen constables and detectives scrambled over the walls and dashed towards the place whence the sound came.

A moment more and the mysterious vault had been raided and the surgeon's perspicacity was repaid by the capture of four or five well-known English and American criminals and a priceless plant for the manufacture of forged bank-notes.

The piece of paper that had so riveted Lucius Shand's attention in the parlour of Rose Cottage had been a sample sheet of the unmistakable water-marked, "deckle-edged," Bank of England "flimsy"—the possession of which, in imitation or original, is illegal and almost impossible. The deductions from its presence there had been but a matter of mental arithmetic to Lucius Shand's brilliant brain, and would have quite sufficed—had that been necessary — to protect his judgment from the influence of Andrew Millican's undoubtedly clever acting.

The garden of Rose Cottage was literally honeycombed with tunnels and one in particular led to the cellar of a house in a neighbouring street—a house rented by an agent of the orgers. It was doubtless by this avenue that Mrs. Millican and her husband had effected their escape.

The public heard nothing of Dr. Shand's exploit in connection with the discovery of the Lorimer gang. When Detective-Sergeant Williamson went into the box to give evidence before the stipendiary magistrate at the preliminary hearing he began his testimony with the stereotyped "from information received, your worship."

Mrs. Millican and her husband were never brought to trial, and, on the whole, the surgeon did not regret it—somehow, he was sorry for the lady from the West. Also, he kept his own counsel with regard to the incident of the revolver, and the worthy Williamson was never able to extract from him a clear opinion as to what had become of the "lunatic."

Some year or two later a great American police authority visited the town of which Division B. forms a part, and to him Lucius Shand happened to tell the story. The surgeon's description enabled the other to identify the "lunatic" and his wife, and Lucius Shand learnt the real history of "Mrs. Millican."

She was the daughter of an ex-senator of the United States—a man who had grown rich "out West"—and had been the idol of a mining town, a crack shot, a fearless horsewoman, a "belle" for whose favours many had fought and died. In the end she had eloped with an actor, been disinherited by her father and disappeared, her husband abandoning the stage. Ultimately both had become known to the United States police as associates of a daring gang of criminals, into whose power the actor had unluckily fallen. Its chief was actually the profligate brother of her own father.

"Not that Eulalie Summers—for that was her maiden name"—said the surgeon's informant, "is at all likely to have stooped to anything low-down herself. No, sir, she wasn't the sort. I guess she just stuck by her husband."

"She certainly did!" retorted Lucius Shand; "I can feel that revolver muzzle against my temple now."

[Next week: "THE STRANGE STAIN ON THE TWEED CAP."

Lucius Shand backed into a side tunnel and watched them in the light that streamed from the trap.

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The Golden Key.

How a Woman Fought for her Lover.

"Sybil!"

No answer.

"Sybil," in a louder tone.

Still no answer.

Lord Morris swore softly to himself.

"I will put an end to this once and for all," he muttered, swinging round and striding along the deck of the *Golden Butterfly*—the prettiest houseboat down all the reach at Henley. "When a regiment of soldiers can hear my voice above the din of a battle, I don't expect to find it drowned by a whisper; confound the fellow's impudence." And running down the ladder he looked round for a boathook and proceeded to lay hold of a punt in which a remarkably pretty girl was reclining with a long-limbed, sunburnt individual, who was apparently engaged in telling her fortune by the lines on her hands.

Both were totally unconscious that anyone was calling, and equally indifferent to the gossip and conjecture which was passing from mouth to mouth among the fashionably-dressed assemblage half hidden behind the gay barrier of pink and white geraniums.

The unexpected movement of the punt made the lovers look up.

"What idiots we were not to go off," exclaimed Lady Sybil, as she caught her father's glance and winced involuntarily. "I shall now have a quarter of an hour's lecture on the impropriety of being with you, on my duties as hostess, and then be packed off to entertain those highly respectable mummies for the rest of the afternoon."

The punt was alongside by this time.

"You are deaf to-day," Lord Morris said grimly as he held out his hand and assisted his daughter to alight. "I have been calling you for the last ten minutes. Mr. Douglas, I am sure you will excuse my daughter."

Something very much like a wink trembled on the Lady Sybil's eyelid. She looked down at her companion—smiled—gave a hopeless little shrug of her shoulders, and meekly followed her father inside.

"You are incorrigible," observed Lord Morris, indicating a chair with a sweep of his hand, and occupying another himself. "How many times have I stated my objection to your encouragement of that man. First you ask him to lunch without even consulting me. And then you go off with him in that extremely conspicuous manner, leaving your guests to entertain themselves. If it had been any other man, I would not have minded so much, but——"

Lord Morris broke off abruptly. Something in his daughter's clear, challenging eyes disconcerted him.

"I know what you are going to say," Lady Sybil interposed drily. "The sooner you change your opinion of Mr. Douglas the better, father; a son-in-law with whom you were at daggers drawn would be a nuisance."

"Don't talk nonsense!" exclaimed Lord Morris sharply. "I am in no humour for joking."

The girl's pretty mouth relaxed into a smile.

"I am not joking," she said, with a determined shrug. "I am going to marry Mr. Douglas."

For a moment father and daughter faced each other defiantly. As usual, the girl ended with victory. She looked so cool and collected, sitting there with her legs crossed and her hands clasped tightly round her knees; her dark eyebrows were slightly raised, and her parted lips revealed a pretty set of strong white teeth. "I am going to marry Mr. Douglas," she repeated.

Lord Morris rose from his chair and took down a box of cigars from a small cabinet behind him.

"My dear child," he said, speaking over his shoulder, "your happiness is my chief consideration. I do not wish to thwart you. I do not wish to influence your decision unnecessarily, but I most emphatically do not think that a poor and idle man like Mr. Douglas is the husband a girl in your position should choose. If he had any interest in life now——"

Lady Sybil sprang forward and laid her hand on her father's shoulder.

"Mr. Douglas has an interest in life, father," she cried, with unwonted eagerness. "He is going to stand for Parliament."

Lord Morris was a little taken aback.

"Stand for Parliament?" he echoed, with unspeakable contempt. "Douglas stand for Parliament? And where, may I ask, is he going to stand for?"

"For West Blankshire—Mr. Douglas is a Radical."

Lord Morris frowned.

"He will have some difficulty in winning that seat," he replied, with a dry laugh. "Girls are not supposed to know much about political matters, but it was West Blankshire which I represented in Parliament before I was raised to a peerage. Now Pelham has been nominated as the Conservative candidate. Do you imagine that an unknown man like Douglas would have the ghost of a chance against him? Do you imagine that a poor adventurer will be able to change a Conservative majority to a Radical one when opposed by my nominee, and, so far as that goes, my nephew and my heir? My dear, if you want an M.P. for a husband, why don't you marry your cousin? Nothing you could do would give your old father greater pleasure than that. You know how devoted Pelham is to you——"

"And I also know how much I abhor him," interposed Sybil, with an angry stamp. "But if Mr. Douglas stands—Mr. Douglas will win the seat. The majority of people have no politics. They go to the poll to vote for an individual, and not for a party programme or a creed."

Lord Morris regarded his daughter with a look of considerable surprise. Her words were heretical, her defiant attitude revealed an independent spirit, which pleased while it irritated him. He said nothing, however, and the girl continued:

"I tell you what," she said, "we will make a bargain. I will marry the new M.P. for Blankshire. If Mr. Douglas is returned, at least, you will acknowledge that he is a man of energy and capacity. If Pelham comes out at the head of the poll, then I will promise to do as you wish in the matter."

"I take you at your word," replied Lord Morris, quietly. The arrangement was not one of which he approved. The result of the election, however, was a certainty, and therefore he did not feel that he was leaving the choice of husbands to chance. Sybil, he believed, would be happier with Lord Pelham than with his political rival—this good-looking, good-for-nothing Douglas. No other consideration would have made it possible for him to countenance his daughter's caprice.

Standing on the lawn of the Isthmian Club later in the afternoon, Lady Sybil caught sight of Douglas piloting his punt towards the landing-stage. The bell was ringing to clear the course, and the bright flotilla of boats, which seemed indissolubly packed from bank to bank, slowly came apart in the middle and crushed together behind the piles.

"Ralf," she said, as he came up to her, "I want to speak to

you. Bring two chairs and sit here in the shade. Who cares whether Leander or Trinity Hall wins the race? Thames and London, is it? Well, it's all the same. You know what I said this morning. Marriage then was altogether out of the question. Now there is one chance. If you win your seat and get into Parliament, the governor has promised to say 'Bless you, my children.' If you don't, I shall have to marry someone else."

A bright look came into the man's face. He bent forward and whispered something in his companion's ear. Then they both laughed. Douglas was grave again the next moment.

"I feel more confident than ever now," he said; "but the odds against me are enormous. To win a seat in these days one has to spend money like water. Your cousin can afford to do things on a more generous scale than I can. After all, members of Parliament buy their seats like stalls at the opera."

There was a despondent ring in his voice. Lady Sybil noticed it—opening her blue eyes wide—and looking at him as if his words conveyed some new suggestion to her mind. There was a distinct sensation of fear. Suppose—it was not an unnatural supposition when she came to think the matter over—suppose, after all, Ralf was to be defeated. And she had given her word to her father.

An involuntary shudder escaped the girl. Was there nothing she could do to help? Nothing to avert her fate. She caught her underlip between her teeth bending her level brows with a visible effort to understand, to think the matter out.

Then an idea flashed across her. Why should she not supply the needful funds? How could she spend her money in a better way? A traitor to her father? Perhaps—but what was one vote more or less to the Government compared with her whole life's happiness? She felt that her lover's eyes were fixed upon her.

Before, however, she had time to speak, their *tête-à-tête* was interrupted. Ralf was carried off to be introduced to some influential member of the Government, and she was left alone with her half-formed plans filling her with a new enthusiasm.

"Perhaps," mused the girl, "I had better not say anything about the matter to Ralf. He might refuse my assistance. Poverty makes men proud. But come what may he shall come out at the head of the poll."

When Lady Sybil made up her mind to do anything, grass was never allowed to grow under her feet. As a first step she invited herself to a friend's house in Blankshire, and set to work canvassing with indefatigable energy. She did not know exactly how to set about it, her ideas about Parliamentary matters were extremely vague. But she was pretty and attractive, and her pleasing gracious ways more than made up for her want of definite knowledge on political topics. Technicalities were easily avoided.

Her friends naturally supposed that she was canvassing on behalf of her cousin. She had not mentioned Ralf Douglas' name to them, but she had the satisfaction of finding that her efforts and solicitations on his behalf were having a marked effect upon his constituents. For a whole week she worked among them. Then she heard that Douglas was coming on the scene himself, and promptly retired.

A few days later she received a letter from him. "I don't know what has come over the people here," he said, "but there does not seem to be a Conservative among them. The poor are Radicals to a man. Someone seems to have been down here canvassing for me. Who ever they may be, I owe them an undying debt. The election will be held in a few days' time. I have not the least doubt now as to the result. My fondest ambition is to be realised, and at the same moment the sweetest little woman in the world will become mine."

In political circles small interest was taken in the election at West Blankshire. The county had returned Conservative members within the memory of the oldest inhabitant. It was true that since Mr. Blenkinsop's elevation to the peerage there was some chance of the majority being reduced, but Pelham Blenkinsop was generally admitted to be the best man to step into his uncle's shoes. Conservatives felt no fear, and Radicals experienced no hope. Mr. Douglas' chances of obtaining the seat were too small to be taken seriously.

So everyone thought.

The day of the election came and went.

When the result of the poll became known the whole of the political world was thrown into a ferment. Columns in the papers were written about it. West Blankshire became the leading topic at the clubs, the most absorbing theme over the teacups. Ralf Douglas, the Radical candidate, had been returned by a narrow majority.

When Lady Sybil heard the result she could hardly believe her ears. Then she went almost mad with joy. The consciousness that it was all her doing filled her with a sense of pride and superiority. Ralf would now be happy. They would both be happy—and it was all due to her.

It was only a few days before she and her lover were to meet again. The interval, however, dragged itself away so slowly that the girl was half ill with excitement before a week had lapsed. At the end of that time they saw one another at Brighton.

Ralf Douglas was seated at a writing-table in the drawing-room of the Metropole. He looked up as the slim, graceful girl entered, and sprang to his feet with a little exclamation of joy.

They did not speak, only they clasped one another's hands and stood there looking into each other's eyes. The world seemed so bright to them. The sun was shining in the heavens, and there was evidence of it in their hearts. There was nothing left that they could wish for. Nothing they wanted but one another's love to fill their cup of happiness.

"I never knew," the man said at last, "what absolute contentment was until this moment. Anticipation and recollection were the only pleasures which I expected from actual realisation. Nothing ever tasted so good as it looked until now. Real untarnished happiness only comes once or twice in a man's life. What a surprising world we live in. All this which has come to us is due to the influence or secret work of some unknown individual—the man or woman, whoever it was, who canvassed for me."

Lady Sybil's eyes gleamed triumphantly. There was no longer any reason for concealing her part in the startling victory.

"Ralf," she cried, throwing back her head with a proud, glad gesture, "it was I who won the day for you. Not bad for little me, was it?"

"You!" incredulously, "why did you not tell me before, my darling?"

He let his eyes—big, grey, unfathomable eyes—wander over the lithesome form before him. How happy the girl looked. How radiant her face was, flushing such pretty, varying tints from sheer excess of joy.

Her lips were trembling so that she could hardly speak.

"I thought you might object to using my money. And — and oh! Ralf, I wanted you so very, very much to win."

She gave a little laugh of self-depreciation, but her sweet, violet eyes mirrored her delightful sense of triumph. Ralf bent over the girl, and dropped a kiss on her hair, stroking her cheek with his large,

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cool hands. "You are the best little woman in the world," he said gratefully, "and the cleverest canvasser. Tell me what magic you employed?"

"A golden key will open every lock," the girl laughed. "I made them promise."

A vague fear shot through her companion, an unformed apprehension made the lines of his face harden.

"Sybil," he gasped, "for Heaven's sake, child, tell me what you mean?"

The light in Lady Sybil's eyes faded all away, the tender little smile disappeared, and a hot frightened blush flamed over the beautiful face.

She looked up terrified. How terrible Douglas looked at that moment. What had she done? What had she said? Ralf's face was white and drawn. His lips were trembling, his limbs felt numb and useless, his brain seemed to swim, and he put out his hand groping for support.

He spoke at last in a hoarse broken whisper. "Tell me," he gasped. White too, and a little dizzy, Lady Sybil took a step towards him.

"I don't know what you mean," she said, half defiantly. "You told me that seats had to be bought, and so I promised all the poor people a five-pound note if you got in. Why do you look at me like that? Oh, Ralf, what is the matter?"

Douglas reeled a little, covering his face with his hands. All his hope and his love died within him, and a great heart-broken sob escaped his lips.

The following week the papers announced the filing of a petition against the return of Mr. Ralf Douglas, the Radical member for West Blankshire, for corrupt practices and bribery.

"A woman all over," was the universal verdict when the whole story was known. T. L.

A First Experience.

The nurse and both grandmothers and all the great aunts have gone, and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Verdant are to spend their first night alone with their first-born, a lusty youth, now five weeks old. Mr. and Mrs. Verdant are nervous and anxious. The baby is serenely indifferent, and wholly non-committal as to the programme he has mapped out for himself.

"What *if* anything should happen?" says Mrs. Charles, for the nineteenth time, as she and Charles lie down for the night, but not "in peace to sleep."

"Oh, I expect he'll be all right," says Charles.

"You have everything where you can put your hand on it at a moment's notice?"

"Yes, dear."

"The paregoric, in case of colic, you know?"

"Yes, dear."

"And is his food for the night all ready?"

"Yes; it's all right."

"I wonder if there's spirit enough in the lamp to last all night?"

"Oh, yes; it's full."

"Oh, dear, I don't believe I left his bottle full of soda and water; and it *must* be left so to keep it sweet, mamma said. *Do* get up and see."

Charles gets up and finds the bottle all right. He lies down wearily. Silence for ten minutes; then—

"Charles, did mamma and the nurse say that his milk should be two-thirds or three-fourths water? I'm *so* afraid I've made a mistake. I've got it written down somewhere. Do get up and see! It's on a piece of paper in the left-hand small drawer of the dressing-table. I wouldn't make a mistake about his food *for the world*."

Charles reports that the milk should be about two-thirds water until baby is five or six weeks old.

"*What* if he should have the croup?" asks Mrs. Charles, with a gasp, at eleven o'clock.

"Babies of his age don't have croup."

"Are you *sure?*"

"The nurse said so."

"Oh, I'm so glad!"

At 11.30 Charles begins his first nap. At 11.35 his wife asks anxiously:

"Oh, Charles, *do* you think he's breathing all right?"

Charles' ear is held over the baby's red and wrinkled little mouth.

"Why, yes; I think so, dear."

"Oh, don't you *know?*"

"Why, yes; I feel quite sure."

"It *seemed* to me that he wasn't, and I was *so* worried! Charles, I should *die* if anything should happen to this baby! Do you think the room is quite warm enough? Do get up and look at the thermometer! *Babyhood* says the temperature should not be *less* than fifty for a young baby,"

"It's just fifty-four," says Charles, as he stands enveloped in a blanket, night-lamp in hand, before the thermometer.

"See what time it is."

"Twenty minutes to twelve."

"He must have his bottle at twelve. We might as well get up now, so as to give ourselves plenty of time to get it ready *carefully*. Bring in the milk. I *do* wonder if that milkman *does* bring us milk from one cow. Baby *must not* have mixed milk."

At precisely twelve o'clock the inviting-looking rubber teat on baby's bottle is slipped between his red gums, and Charles drops down wearily.

"Mercy, Charles! You *almost* rolled on baby! I'm *so* afraid you *will* roll on him some night and *kill* him! Such things *have* happened. Why *doesn't* he take his supper?"

"He's asleep, I fancy."

"I *wonder* if he's well? *Do* bring the lamp!"

Charles brings the lamp.

"What makes him twitch his mouth and wrinkle up his forehead like that?"

"Oh, all babies do."

"I don't believe it. Oh, Charles, *shouldn't* you go for mamma?"

"Oh, no, dear; he's all right."

"Oh, I'm afraid he isn't! We should *never* forgive ourselves if anything happened to him. You'd *better* go for mamma" (who lives three miles away).

"It's nothing but a little pain."

"Oh, the poor, *poor* little, precious darling? Charles, get up and warm that paregoric, and light the fire in the range, and heat this flannel shawl *hot*, and be ready to go for mamma and the doctor at a *moment's* notice! I am *so* worried. You had better get Bridget up. We may need her help any moment. Bring me the powder-box and two small and one large safety pins. Light the gas. Look at the thermometer again. Only forty-*nine!* Make up the fire at once. Don't take your eyes off baby for an instant while I dress."

The grey dawn of the morning finds Mr. and Mrs. Verdant and Bridget hovering over the kitchen range. They have been hovering there most of the night. But one person in that anxious household has slept sweetly and peacefully, and that person is—the baby. O. P. W.

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

He Proves the Theory of Transmigration, and Meets with an Adventure.

Mr. Bowser had seemed absent-minded at dinner, and for half an hour afterwards he smoked his cigar in silence and took no interest in his evening paper. He finally aroused himself with a start and said:

"Mrs. Bowser, I want to talk with you on a very serious matter, and I trust I may have your serious attention. A man from Liverpool came into the office to-day and had a pug dog with him, and, do you know, I recognised in that dog an old and dear friend of mine who died years ago?"

"So you have got back to that nonsense, have you?" she replied. "It is only a few months ago that you were talking transmigration and got bitten by the cat and annoyed the cook so much that she left next day. Why can't you let such subjects alone?"

"So you call the theory of transmigration nonsense?" he sharply inquired, as he turned on her.

"Of course I do. At least, it is a theory so absurd that no sensible person will waste any time over it."

"Is it nothing to you, Mrs. Bowser, whether your soul passes into the body of a dove or a dog after death? If it isn't, it's something to me what becomes of mine. I don't hanker to be a hippopotamus. This theory of transmigration is gaining ground every day, and millions of people already believe in it."

"Well, if they want to believe in such rubbish let them do it. I'm not going to."

"Rubbish! Rubbish! By what right do you call the belief of 30,000,000 people rubbish? There is either good foundation for this theory or else all these people are fools. How can you say what becomes of your soul after death?"

"How can you?" she queried.

"I can't exactly, and yet when I look into the face of a pug dog and behold the features of a dear old playmate, Tom Watkins—his eyes, his smile—it goes to convince me that there is a great deal more in this theory than I have hitherto accepted."

"I trust that your old friend was well and that you enjoyed his call," quietly observed Mrs. Bowser.

"Oh, you do! That's you all over! I never begin to talk with you on any matter of deep interest without your trying to belittle it. Woman, here and now I boldly announce myself a transmigrationist, and if you have got any sense in your head I can prove the theory to you inside of an hour! Yes, I can do it inside of a minute! Look at that cat!"

The family cat had just come in from the back yard and was sitting up with a look of innocence in her face. Mrs. Bowser regarded her for a few moments and then said:

"It's our old cat right enough."

"Yes, but whom does she remind you of? By thunder, but it's strange I never noticed the likeness before! Mrs. Bowser, as true as you live, the soul of your sister Hannah, who died three years ago, passed into that cat! Look at her, I say! If that isn't Hannah's expression to a T, I'll eat my hat."

"You must be crazy! She looks like any other cat, and that's all there is about it. You can see to what silly things your theory leads."

"And you see no resemblance?" he asked.

"Of course not."

"Then it's because your obstinacy won't permit you to. Hannah's soul went into that cat as sure's you're Mrs. Bowser, and that's why she's always been as fond of us as she has. That's only one case, however. All human souls do not pass into animals, of course. Some of them pass into other people. When I die, my soul may pass into that of some babe who will grow up to be a celebrated poet or philosopher."

"Or a rag dealer or a knife grinder," added Mrs. Bowser.

He was about to resent the sneer when the cook came up and said there was a tramp at the back door who wanted money and refused to go away.

"Perhaps it's someone into whom the soul of one of your old friends has passed," suggested Mrs. Bowser as Mr. Bowser started downstairs. "If it proves to be so, you will, of course, use him very tenderly."

He turned and glared at her and nodded his head in an ominous way, but she had given him an idea he meant to work on. At the door he found a big, burly tramp who was a believer in the "rights of man," and who lost no time in saying:

"Why should I have to sleep on the grass under a tree while you occupy a hair mattress in a luxurious bedroom? I want the price of a night's lodging."

"And you shall have it," replied Mr. Bowser, as he walked the man slowly down to the gate to be out of earshot of the house. "You have arrived at an opportune moment. Have you ever heard of the theory of transmigration?"

"Never."

"Well, it's the idea that when a person dies his soul passes into the body of someone else. Turn to the light and let me get a square look at you."

"No tricks, governor. You'll have to look out if you rile me."

"There will be no tricks. You strangely remind me of a boy named Joe Davis I used to know years ago. He died when he was fifteen. I am wondering——"

"If his soul passed into my body? What sort of a feller was he, governor?"

"A good boy. Yes; he was truly good and liberal-hearted."

"Then you needn't wonder any longer. I'm your old friend Joe. You've hit me off to a nail. I knew you the minute you came to the door. Shake hands, governor, and if you don't mind I'll take that half-crown you borrowed of me just before I died."

"But I—I didn't borrow any half-crown from you!" stammered Mr. Bowser, as he realised that his theory was growing on his hands. "Come to look at you again, I don't think you are my old playmate."

"None of that, old man!" growled the tramp. "I'm the soul of Joe Davis, and I want that half-crown. Pay up!"

"I—think there's some mistake. You are too old, and your nose is too big, and your eyes——"

"No mistake, governor, and don't you try to bilk an old playmate. You borrowed that half-crown from me to go to the circus, and I want it back."

Mr. Bowser started for the house, but the tramp seized him and gave him a shake that rattled his teeth. Then the conflict was on, and as Mrs. Bowser, the cook and the cat got outdoors there was a mix up in the moonlight that ended with the tramp leaping the fence and making off and Mr. Bowser slowly getting up and glaring round and asking what had happened.

"Oh, nothing much!" replied Mrs. Bowser. "You just met the soul of an old playmate which had passed into the body of a tramp."

"And—and——"

"And the soul threw you down and rolled you on the grass till you'll smell of new mown hay for a month to come. Better come in and go to bed."

M. Quad.

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The Shadow Show.

Things are not Always what they Appear to be.

"Never believe anything that you hear, and only half that you see," Jack's father had told him, years ago.

Now Jack had, so far, always acted up to that piece of advice, and had got on very comfortably in consequence.

Then, one fine day, or rather night, returning to town after a lengthy absence, he rushed up to his sweetheart's house, and saw a picture reflected upon the blind.

"Only believe half that you see."

This is what Jack saw, shadowed upon the blind.

Two faces in profile, a man's and a girl's. The faces close together, as close as it is possible for two faces to be, lip pressed against lip, and chin against chin.

Clearly Jack saw no need to enter that room to know what was going on inside.

"Only believe half that you see."

Nonsense! "Seeing is believing," and here was a case in point. There could be no room for doubt. It was plain as daylight.

He knew the girl. He thought he knew the man. However, he would make sure. He had no desire to be unfair.

He gave a thundering rat-a-tat at the door. Maisie herself came to open it. When she saw who it was, she gave a little cry and promptly threw herself into his arms.

Jack was taken aback. He was not prepared for such duplicity. He had expected her to start, and tremble, and shrink in guilty terror at sight of him.

Yet she who, but a moment ago, had pressed her lips to those of his loathly rival, was now ready and even eager to shower kisses upon him, Jack, the man she had so basely deceived.

He disengaged himself sternly from her embrace.

"Why, Jack, darling, what's the matter? Aren't you glad to see me?"

Really, it was superb, that tone of simulated affection.

"You have a visitor, I think?" he said, stiffly.

Her face clouded.

"Yes, that Mr. Sampson. Isn't it a bore? Mamma isn't well, so I've had to entertain him."

"You appear to have succeeded pretty well," retorted Jack, with grim emphasis.

"Oh, yes," said Maisie cheerfully, "he's not bad company."

"Evidently not."

"But I wish he'd go now," with a loving glance at Jack. "Let's see if we can't get rid of him."

"Pray don't trouble to do that. I am not going to stay."

"Not going to stay? Oh Jack, and you've only just come!"

Her disappointment was beautifully done.

"May I ask what is your object in keeping up this farce?" asked Jack impatiently.

"Farce? What farce? I don't understand. How strange you are Jack."

"What a superb actress you are, Miss Day."

"Why Jack that's the first time you've called me Miss Day since we became engaged. And whatever do you mean by saying I'm a superb actress?"

"Surely you deserve the term?"

"I don't in the least know what you mean," returned Maisie with a pretty assumption of anger. "You're not at all nice to-night, Jack. You're changed."

"Changed! *I* changed! Ha—ha, that's good—very good!" And Jack burst into a sardonic laugh.

"You—you can't have been—but no it isn't possible. You've never done such a thing in your life. And yet— Oh, Jack, tell me—you—you haven't been—drinking?"

The last words came in a horrified whisper.

At this point Jack I regret to say, completely lost his temper.

"For heaven's sake, let's have no more of this fooling!" he cried. "If you've been unfaithful and fickle, you can't help it, perhaps. It may be your nature. But why add deceit to your other offences?"

"Jack, you must be mad to say such things to me."

"And you must be mad to try to keep up the deception. Let me assure you, it is useless. I know everything. I have seen everything."

"Know what? Seen what?"

"In the future," continued Jack, not heeding the interruption, "in future when you receive gentlemen visitors, let me advise you to place the lamp in such a position that your shadows do not fall upon the blind."

The next moment the front door had slammed behind Jack, and Maisie was left standing in the hall alone.

* * * * * *

On the day following the little episode above related, Jack received a small package in Maisie's handwriting. It contained her engagement ring, and various other articles of jewellery with which he had presented her, accompanied by a formal little note, beginning "Dear Mr. Day" and signed "Yours sincerely, Maisie Day." The note merely stated that, after what had passed between them on the previous evening, their engagement, presumably, was to be considered at an end.

Jack acknowledged receipt of the package in similar terms.

Thereupon he did not see Maisie again for nearly three months. They had many friends in common, however, and it was inevitable that sooner or later they should meet.

They did meet, sooner than Jack had expected.

The Jones' were "at home" to their particular friends in a promiscuous kind of way, every Sunday evening. Now young Jones was a particular friend of Jack's, and Miss Jones was a particular friend of Maisie's. It was at the Jones' that they met, one Sunday evening.

It was really very awkward. At least, so Jack found it. Maisie, apparently, didn't mind in the least. She shook hands with Jack, smiled at him politely, and began chatting pleasantly, without turning a hair.

"Just as if I had never been anything more to her than a casual acquaintance," Jack thought, bitterly.

Presently he cast a furtive glance at the third finger of her left hand, it was unoccupied.

"They're not engaged yet, then," reflected Jack. "I suppose, in common decency, she'll wait a month or two."

Maisie noted the look and read the thought.

"No, we're not engaged yet," she said, and began to laugh in a heartless manner.

Young Jones was leaning against the piano. He stood between the window and the tall standard lamp that lighted the room, and his shadow fell upon the white blind.

Maisie rose, suddenly, from the chair next to Jack which she was occupying, and, with a certain deliberation, walked up to the piano and began talking to Jones.

Suddenly there was a shriek of laughter from Fanny Jones.

"For goodness' sake, don't move," Maisie whispered to her companion. The latter stared at her in surprise, but obeyed.

Maisie, too, stood motionless.

"The blind! That picture! Look! Did you ever see anything so funny?" gurgled Fanny.

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They followed the direction of her finger, and immediately her mirth became infectious.

There, clearly silhouetted upon the blind, they saw a touching picture.

It was the profile of Maisie and the profile of Edgar Jones in close proximity, such close proximity that it appeared glued against lip, and nose against nose.

Jack stared at the shadows in amazement, then turned his dazed eyes upon their solid counterparts.

Young Jones and Maisie were chatting together in apparent unconcern. Their faces, seen in profile, overlapped by the fraction of an inch. Yet there was a decorous space between them, for Maisie was standing at least half a yard further away from the blind. But, if the shadows were to be believed, Maisie and Edgar, at that moment, were locked in a passionate embrace.

Then the full meaning of what he saw flashed upon him.

What a fool he had been!

And Maisie, would she ever forgive him?

Amid the general hilarity, his confusion and distress escaped unnoticed. Everyone was eager to try the effect of his own shadow in comical combination with another, preferably of opposite sex.

Presently, in the midst of an amazing series of silhouette tableaux, Mrs. Jones exclaimed—

"Good gracious, I never thought of it! The shadows can be seen from the outside!"

"And at the present moment," said Mr. Jones with a chuckle, as he peeped out of the window, "we are edifying an appreciative crowd of small boys."

"To whom it probably doesn't occur that shadows have length and breadth, but no thickness," put in Maisie, with a significant glance at Jack. Then, in a whisper, she added—

"You don't deserve it, but I've decided to forgive you."

Grete Hahn.

Coals of Fire.

How a Man Lost his Money and a Wife.

The night was closing down over London. It was cold, and the biting wind whirled down the lighted pavement of Regent Street and blew the rags of smoke—only one could not see that—from the face of the waxing moon, which began to show faintly above the myriads of coloured lights.

Halford turned up his coat collar and thrust his hands into his pockets, and bent forward at an angle against the wind. He walked swiftly, recklessly, never feeling it as he roughly jostled passer-by after passer-by, nor heeding the sharp glances that were directed at him by the disgruntled ones. His brain was in a whirl. He was conscious of a dim desire to get among people—a crowd, noise, excitement. It was the tumult within calling for response in his environment.

Emma Harrington had just refused him. It was not the first time, but it was vastly different from the other times. On this occasion it had been borne in upon him that she meant what she said. Emma was a typine, a grey-eyed mite who lived in Highbury, and her ways were so quiet, and her speech was so gentle that when she said no at first, Halford had never dreamt that she meant it. Perhaps it is true that she was in the wrong not to have made her refusal more decided, but something must be set down to Halford's overwhelming conceit; anyhow, there it was—he had been going on loving her, even more and more, until when the final wrench came it seemed to Halford that there was nothing left in life for him.

Of course Halford was not a man of decided character or of wide experience, or his better sense would have asserted itself. He was of the emotional type, rather than the intellectual, and an emotional person's strength is just his weakness in his most dangerous mood—the chain is no stronger than its weakest link. He was a clerk in one of the wholesale houses of the city at a salary of £180 a year.

Halford was not angry with Emma. He was filled with wonder at her strange perverseness, and with pity for himself. Also there was a rage of blind jealousy within him, for he reasoned that if she did not love him well enough to marry him it must be because she loved somebody else better. But nobody could love her better than he, he was certain of that. Why, he would die for her! That would prove his devotion. She would be sorry then. An image of his dead body, and Emma weepingly identifying it, filled his eyes with tears. Go to! He would commit suicide.

He really meant it, for he loved her sincerely, and she had given him a mortal hurt. He turned abruptly and walked a little further with the intention of going towards the Embankment.

Suddenly he reflected that he had a hundred pounds in the bank. She might as well have that, so, luckily happening to see a lawyer's office open, he went in. The business took nearly an hour.

He came out of the office feeling decidedly better. The necessary attention to details had diverted his mind from his trouble. It occurred to him that he ought to leave the world decently attired. He walked to his lodgings, bathed and shaved, and exchanged his working clothes for his frock-coat and its necessary accompaniments.

He then started off towards Waterloo Bridge, which he found deserted, except for a man pacing up and down on the same pavement as he himself was. Something in his air arrested Halford's none too alert attention. He was shabby and sad looking, but bore certain marks of refinement. Halford felt vaguely annoyed; somehow he resented a stranger's presence when he should do the deed. This was foolish, as he presently reflected. It would be well to have a witness, they would find him the more quickly.

He approached the wall and stood looking down at the dancing of the lights on the dark water. He shivered a little; it was very cold. The stranger paced back and forth behind him for a time, then stopped. "What are you doing there?" he said harshly.

"Waiting," returned Halford, with simplicity.

"Waiting for what?"

"Waiting until there's no one about."

"So am I," the stranger returned. He knocked his cigar against the wall and replaced it between his lips. "I am going to jump over. Now don't you betray me," he said quickly, "for if you should you would merely cause me the trouble of making a another journey."

"I have no intention of betraying you," Halford said in a suppressed tone. "That is just what I am going to do myself."

The two stared at each other. Finally the stranger ventured: "What for?"

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"What are you doing it for?" retorted Halford.

"I have no hesitation in telling you. I am suffering from a lingering and incurable disease. It not only makes me wretched, but unfit for work. I have no means and I haven't any desire to become a public beneficiary, so I'm taking this way out of it." A pause, then he added, "One confidence deserves another."

"Oh," said Halford, with a painful effort, "same old trouble—a girl."

"Thrown you over?"

Halford nodded.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing, only she says she doesn't care for me."

"Oh, don't you believe it. Never say die."

"No; it's no use," Halford responded drearily. "I ought to have seen it long ago, only I was such an ass."

"My boy, you'll forget her in a month. Go and have a glorious old spree, and you'll be all right."

Halford shook his head. But he had got started to talking and the rest of his tale came forth without much difficulty. The stranger was soon in possession of the facts of his bequest to Emma. After he had finished the man stood looking thoughtfully at Halford.

"Five feet eight," he murmured, eye to eye with him, "medium complexion, brown hair, blue eyes, moustache, weight about the same as mine—— What's the use," he said, "of giving her all that money and making her feel sorry she didn't take you, for nothing? I'll tell you a trick worth two of that. Nobody here knows me. Change clothes with me—you've papers on to identify you, I suppose. I'll jump over without witnesses. When they find me I'll be changed so they couldn't tell me from you. You go somewhere and keep quiet for a month or two till it's all blown over; then come out and claim her while her remorse and gratitude are at high tide."

"How about the money?"

"Do you care for that—you'd get it, anyhow."

"No, but suppose she shouldn't be glad to see me?"

"Is there any danger of that?"

"N-no; I don't think she realised what she was doing; she would be glad to have me come back if she once thought I was dead."

"Well, try it, anyway; it can't do any harm."

"I will," said Halford, and they shook hands.

The two men retired to a lodging-house and exchanged clothing. Then Halford, suddenly feeling very queer, sat down on a bench and watched the other man go out through the door. The resemblance to himself, back view, was not reassuring. He was conscious of distinct relief that his suicide was to be by proxy.

Halford hid himself in a quiet lodging in a back street to await the turn of events. He was interested in reading the newspaper accounts of his disappearance, and his bequest to Emma furnished material for two columns in the papers. But the supplementary tale of the finding of his dead body was withheld.

The little money he had with him tided him over the first few days but at last he was obliged to earn something, and his shabby garb found him an obscure place behind the counter of a shabby grocer's shop. He hated the work and found himself desperately homesick for the comparatively magnificent surroundings of his former position.

A fortnight passed; he began to venture about the city a little. He did not dare to go near Emma's home, feeling less and less sure of his welcome, even had the long-hoped-for identification taken place. But he tried to catch a glimpse of her.

The meeting came about quite unexpectedly after all, one Sunday in Hyde Park. He saw her while she was at some distance, walking with a man of his own height dressed in black.

Halford did not know him, but was sure he had seen him before. He noticed with pain that their understanding of each other was evidently perfect. Nevertheless, he went toward her boldly. She raised her eyes. Her face turned white and she caught at her escort's arm. "Emma!" said Halford.

"I—I—you have the advantage of me, sir," she faltered.

"Emma!" he repeated, in a beseeching tone. A masculine voice cut in roughly.

"Confound your impudence! What do you mean by speaking to my wife?"

Halford looked at him squarely for the first time. That comprehensive glance took in also his own best hat, tie, and broadcloth coat. Both men took a step backward. The one muttered an oath. The other's jaw dropped. A moment they stood so, then Emma's voice broke the spell. "Oh, George, please take me away!"

A party of tourists, a dozen in all, came up behind them laughing and chattering. They bore them past and left Halford standing alone.

"Well, upon my word!" said Halford.

Julian Stanford.

THE CAUSE OF THE GREAT COMMOTION.

"What is it?"

"Anybody been run over?"

"Is it a man in a fit?"

High above the ceaseless rumble and roar of traffic rose human voices in anxious inquiry, and the dense throng grew denser still. It was just before sunset, and the mighty heart of the business centre throbbed with the feverish energy that marked the closing hours of another day of toil and the hurrying home of restless, eager thousands.

The swiftly moving streams of humanity that are wont to meet in eddying whirls in this busy vortex and then diverge and move onward again, each in its destined course, had suddenly become blocked, and chaos reigned.

Pushed towards the common centre by the ever-hurrying throngs afoot, in carriages and in 'buses, and unable to extricate themselves, men, women and children gasped for breath, and the crowd in the streets and on the pavement overflowed into the alleys and surged hither and thither, like the resistless ebb and flow of a mighty sea.

A policeman on the outskirts of the dense throng climbed a lamp-post, and from his elevated position surveyed the scene.

"What's the matter?" inquired a hundred voices as he climbed down.

"I don't know," he answered, and, with gloomy, lowering brow, he strode across the street, disappeared down a short flight of stairs, from which a few moments later he emerged wiping his mouth, and in the same stern, uncompromising way he walked on farther, and set a fire alarm going.

Meanwhile the surging multitude grew every moment more inextricable.

Something must be done.

Fiercely elbowing his way through the crowd, a newspaper reporter at last was seen bearing down towards the centre of the compact mass. His hat was off, his hair was flying in the breeze, and his face was deathly pale; but with set teeth and dilated nostrils he pushed his way along, thrusting to the right and left everyone who opposed his progress.

Reaching the centre of the throng, he seized two individuals by their arms, and in the same resolute, fearless way, opened a passage for them to the outside; and, as if by magic, the vast concourse dissolved—the converging streams of humanity whirled and eddied as before, and the business-heart of the great city throbbed again.

The reporter had conjectured rightly. The blockade was caused by two women who had met in the exact centre of the street and stopped to tell each other the troubles they were having with their nurse-girls.

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NEW COMPETITION. **START TO-DAY.**

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

NAMES OF BRITISH AND IRISH RIVERS.

First Prize - - £10. Second Prize - - £2.

Third to Sixth Prizes - - £1 each.

ALL COUPONS APPEAR IN SHORT STORIES.

Below will be found fifteen sets of words, each set describing the name of a river in the United Kingdom. Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

Note These Facts. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until we tell you to send it in.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

FIRST LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:

To flow gently..... Ouse.

1. A melody ..... 1 .....
2. To annoy ..... 2 .....
3. Proclamation ..... 3 .....
4. A mechanical contrivance for changing a circular motion into an alternate one..... 4 .....
5. Woollen cloth ..... 5 .....
6. To fly rapidly ..... 6 .....
7. For what reason ..... 7 .....
8. Out of ..... 8 .....
9. A delightful region ..... 9 .....
10. Emblem of innocence ..... 10 .....
11. A light, small carriage ..... 11 .....
12. Next after third ..... 12 .....
13. A prong ..... 13 .....
14. One who subdues ..... 14 .....
15. The seed of the pine ..... 15 .....

Name.....

Address.. .....

.....

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Cut to edge—>

MR. BATESON'S PATTERNS.

How Some Letters were Recovered by a Clever Trick.

"WHAT makes you look so serious this morning, little woman? Been getting too deep into debt with Madame——? If so, let me know the amount, and you shall have a cheque."

The speaker was an elderly man, who looked what he was—a City magnate, and the lady to whom his remark was addressed—his wife—was many years his junior.

"You're too good to me, Robert. No; it's not debt, but desire, if you must know," with a little laugh.

"And what is it you have set your heart on this time? Something in the way of diamonds, eh?"

"No, dear; nothing so extravagant as that. But you know that new Indian depôt in Oxford Street? Well, when I was there yesterday they showed me some lovely new stuffs they had just had over, and I thought——"

"Why, surely you have as many dresses as a woman can possibly want, haven't you?"

"Yes, dear, dresses, but this isn't quite the same thing; it is more fit for a boating costume, and I thought as we have accepted the Lewis's invitation for their river party next week, it would be just the very thing, and it's not dear—at least not very—only fifteen guineas for the costume complete, and oh, Robert, it is just lovely. They wanted to send it over to me to see the effect; one can't tell in a shop, you know."

"And I hope you told them to do nothing of the kind. I was going to speak to you about this river party. I am not at all sure I shall be able to go, and, of course, you——"

"Oh, I *am* sorry; but if you really can't go, I must go alone—I wouldn't miss it for worlds. I hear it's going to be an awfully good thing, finishing up with fireworks and a dance on the lawn in the evening; and I did so want to have that dress, if only I might——"

"I don't mind you having the dress in the least——"

"Oh, you old dear!"

"Perhaps you will be good enough to allow me to finish the sentence. I was going to say I don't in the least mind you having the dress, if you have set your heart upon it; but I do very much object to your seeing so much of Mrs. Lewis and her set. They are not my style at all, and I am old-fashioned enough not to like to see my wife paid court to by all sorts and conditions of men."

"You silly old goose, what can it matter when I don't care a straw for any of them like I do for you?" throwing her arms round his neck.

"Oh, I'm not jealous, if that's what you mean, but I tell you candidly I don't care about this Mrs. Lewis, and I should be very glad if you would see less of her."

"But, Robert, you yourself accepted her invitation for this river party, and I can't possibly back out of it now. Surely you could manage to get away from the horrid City for once. I should enjoy it ever so much more if you came."

This was an artful move on the lady's part, and well she knew it, but it had the desired effect all the same.

"Well, well, my dear, I'll see about it, and you can speak to me about this—this Indian dress by-and-bye. I—I hope it isn't anything very startling."

"It's just lovely, that's what it is—a kind of soft, clinging material that makes you feel as if you hadn't anything on."

"My dear Kitty! Well, I must be off now—bye, bye! Would you care to go to the theatre to-night? If so, I'll get a box for the new piece they're all talking about."

"I would rather have that dress, dear, if you don't mind."

Whether Mr. Robert Lambard heard or not is a matter of mystery; at any rate, he did not reply.

And here it may not be out of place to interpolate a few details as to Mr. and Mrs. Lambard. He, a rich man who had escaped the feminine toils until comparatively late in life, had made the lady's acquaintance at a fashionable sea-side boarding-house, she being at the time a young and decidedly attractive-looking widow, whose husband had died two or three years previously, leaving her enough to live upon, as the saying is, but not what she considered sufficient to enjoy life.

Hence it was not to be wondered at that when the rich, elderly suitor declared himself she accepted him, not, however, without a pang of regret for a certain young gentleman between whom and herself some very amatory passages had taken place; but then he was poor and could not afford to keep her in the way she longed for, and had he not gone away after that mad proposal of his that they should marry and hope for the best. Since then she had never once heard from him.

Such was the position of affairs when Mr. Lambard came into her life and offered her marriage and a comfortable home with everything she could wish for, an offer which she felt it would be madness on her part to refuse.

Shortly after her engagement the favoured suitor had re-appeared on the scene, and, although Mr. Lambard had not in any way attempted to pry into his *fiancée's* past history, he was, as is not uncommon with elderly gentlemen who marry young wives, of a decidedly jealous disposition, and he gave his lady-love to understand that the less she saw of the young gentleman in question the better, and that after they were once married he would not be amongst the regular visitors to his house.

To her credit, be it said, she had not attempted to renew the intimacy, and had done her best, so far as possible, to banish his remembrance from her mind, but on this particular morning, as it appeared, he was to be brought prominently before her.

In the interesting discussion over the breakfast table as to the forthcoming river party and the new dress to be worn on the occasion, she had omitted to open her letters, a little bundle of which lay by the side of her plate, and it was only when the closing of the street door announced that her husband had set out that she bethought herself of the unopened letters beside her.

Several of them were casually glanced at and laid aside, but suddenly her eye caught sight of what was evidently a familiar handwriting, and, hastily tearing open the envelope, she read the brief contents with anything but a look of pleasure on her handsome face.

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"Dear Mrs. Lambard," it ran, "as nothing long remains a secret, I dare say you have heard ere this that I am engaged to be married to Miss Eva Meeking, and as some very foolish effusions of mine which may still be in your possession (unless you have already destroyed them) can no longer be of any interest to you, I should be glad if you would kindly hand them over, under sealed cover, to my friend Bateson, who has promised to make a duty call upon you to-day between three and four o'clock.

"Very sincerely yours,
"Claude Anstiss."

For a moment Mrs. Lambard sat with the letter before her, with a look on her face that did not imply she was at all pleased with what she had just read. Then she got up, stamped her foot, and said aloud:

"And this is the man who at one time professed himself so madly in love with me that nothing would do but he must terminate his existence, when I told him frankly that love in a cottage did not constitute my sole idea of happiness, and that it was better we should wait until his prospects should have improved.

"And then he went away," she continued, in a softened tone of voice, "and as he didn't write I thought he had forgotten all about me, and Mr. Lambard came along and proposed, and I accepted him, as most girls would, situated as I was, I suppose. And then Claude turns up again, declares that life is not worth living—and now, in less than six months, he coolly tells me that he is going to marry a chit of a girl without two ideas in her head, but a good many golden sovereigns in her pocket.

"Bah! All men are alike, after all. I've a good mind to send him back his letters without troubling his friend to come and fetch them at all. No, I won't. I will make him come and fetch them, that's what I'll do; it will serve him right, and make him see how contemptuously I regard his conduct."

Having come to this conclusion, she marched off to her boudoir, and, unlocking a drawer in her escritoire, took out a bundle of neatly tied up letters, indorsed "From Claude—July to September, 1899."

"It didn't last so very long, after all," was her mental comment, "but it was very pleasant whilst it did, and now it is all over between us he wants them back, does he, so as to blot out the remembrance, I suppose. Only to think a man who could write like this" (reading one of the letters) "could ever really forget—and I daresay he has written to her in much the same strain. Oh, what fools we women are, to be sure!

"What a joke it would be send them to her, the little chit, it would just serve him right, I declare it would," and then her mood changed and she found herself giving way to tears.

"If only he had written it might have been, oh, so different," she sobbed to herself, "and whose fault was it? Not mine anyway, but his, and he shall pay for it—he shall come and ask me for the letters himself," from which it will be seen that consistency was not Mrs. Lambard's strong point.

Punctually to the time appointed, the friendly envoy in the form of Mr. Algernon Bateson, an average specimen of the young man about town, presented himself, and having sent in his card, was soon admitted to the lady's presence.

"Pray sit down Mr.—Mr. Bateson."

Bashfulness had never been one of Mr. Bateson's failings, and he speedily came to the point without any beating about the bush.

"Anstiss told me you would be good enough to see me, and he said——"

"Yes."

There was something in the way the word was spoken that temporarily discomfited the young gentleman, but he speedily recovered his self-possession.

"He—he told me he had written to you, and—I—understood you would give me some letters of his which he imagined you would not care to keep now."

"Oh, he told you that, did he? And did he say why he did not think it worth while to make a request for their return in person?"

"Well, 'pon honour, now, don't you know, rather awkward position for him, don't you know, and he thought——"

"That by deputing you he would save himself a bad quarter of an hour, I suppose."

"Well, you see——"

"Oh, yes, I quite appreciate his feelings; but you can tell him from me that, although I have no wish or desire to retain his letters, at the same time I am not prepared to give them up except to himself."

"I think you're rather hard upon him, you know; I do, really. Anstiss is a rattling good fellow, you know."

"That is a matter I do not care to discuss. You have my answer, and——"

"Where are you, Kitty?"

"Good gracious! My husband! Here, put these letters in that box by your side. Quick, please!"

Mr. Bateson did as he was bid, the box in question being one of those artistic arrangements in which enterprising West-end tradesmen are in the habit of sending out patterns, and bore the name of the Indian Depôt in Oxford Street, to which reference has already been made.

Mr. Lambard's face wore an ugly scowl on seeing a good-looking, well-dressed young man *tête-à-tête* with his wife.

"I did not know you were engaged, my dear."

Mr. Bateson rose as if to go.

"Oh, Robert, I am so glad you have come. This gentleman has called from the Indian Depôt and brought me some more patterns of that material to see, but I told him I had not made quite up my mind, but that he might leave the box and I would think it over."

Mr. Bateson had in his time been in many predicaments, but it had never before come within the range of his experience to be coolly set down as a draper's, or costumier's assistant; and he was very nearly, as he said afterwards to his bosom friend Claude Anstiss, giving the thing away by an indignant disavowal, but an imploring glance from the lady restrained him.

The scowl which had gathered on Mr. Lambard's face gave way to a smile of satisfaction as he addressed himself to the young man.

"It's very good of your people to be so attentive," and then to his wife: "I don't think we need detain this gentleman, my dear. For wishing to give you a little pleasant surprise I called in at the place in Oxford Street on my way home, and was able to ascertain without much difficulty the particular costume you had set your heart upon, and, having done so, ordered them to send it round at once."

"On behalf of the firm, sir, I beg to thank you, and, as the lady will not require to see the patterns I have brought, I may as well take them away with me," suiting the action to the word by taking up the box and preparing to leave.

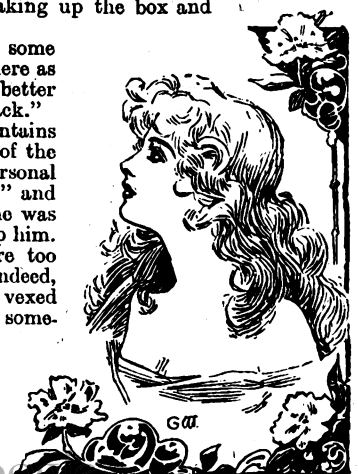
"Perhaps there are some patterns of trimmings there as well, and, if so, you had better leave it. I can send it back."

"No, madam, it contains nothing beyond samples of the material and a few personal memoranda of my own," and with a deferential bow he was gone before she could stop him.

"Oh, Robert, you are too good to me, you are indeed, and I'm very sorry if I vexed you this morning," with something approaching a sob.

"There, there, don't cry, little woman, I want to see you in this wonderful new gown, and I mean to go to the party myself."

J. M. B.



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Doctor Temple's Sacrifice.

What One Woman's Love Did.

A delicious November afternoon even in London. There is no fog, and the sunlight is streaming in through the large bow window at the end of Lady Mayfair's drawing-room.

There are a number of people talking with charming animation about topics which speak of an intellectual dearth and moral nothingness.

Someone says:

"Gardner's head over ears in love with that little woman."

It is untrue. Each time I catch his eye he looks more and more of a martyr. At last he makes some excuse to the pretty, dark-eyed widow, and comes towards me with his cup in one hand and a thin slice of bread and butter in the other.

"Bored, old man?" I ask, as he comes up. His shoulders are a little more bent than usual, and his head poked further forward.

I am hardly prepared for the tone of genuine disgust in which he answers me.

"Men, my dear fellow, are trespassing at these entertainments," he observes, pushing me a little, and taking my place at the window, which I resent.

"If so, they are on very good terms with the keepers."

Gardner laughs in a condescending way.

"With the man-traps, you mean."

His face assumes a serious expression, and he glances rather gloomily over the leafless square.

"What a disgraceful waste of time it is for a man," he remarks suddenly. "I would much rather do a good day's work in the fields than spend my time like this."

"It's the penalty of being rich," I answer. "You might do anything you like, and for that very reason everything seems tasteless."

"If only one's power of deriving pleasure increased in the same ratio as one's means of providing enjoyment, what a world this would be!" he says moodily, and then, with an entire change of voice, he adds, rather comically, "it's all right for girls, you know. They like having nothing to do—and do it admirably."

"How do you know?" is the rather unexpected retort I make.

Gardner turns round and stares at me curiously; but he follows the direction of my eye, and his smooth babyish face puckers up into a little laugh. I notice, however, a sudden wave of colour mounts to his cheeks, and this opens up a new train of thought which startles me.

The object of our attention is certainly the prettiest girl in the room. I have never come across anyone yet who ventured to question "Doctor" Temple's beauty, and yet for the last ten minutes she has been sitting by herself on a low chair, biting her lips, and evidently in a very dangerous frame of mind.

Marion Temple is slight and girlish-looking. A gleam which speaks of a love of life and its pleasures, that even habitual restraint cannot quite subdue, burns in her eyes. There is an air of unconscious grace about all her movements, a stateliness in her bearing, and a scornful expression on her proud face, with its crown of wondrous chestnut hair, which speak of a haughty, untamed nature and a heart capable of any sacrifice for love or hatred.

"There is a woman who enjoys it no more than you," I observe. Gardner has quite recovered his self-composure.

"No wonder," he answers shortly. "Look at Jamieson."

I now see my friend for the first time. He is standing in the middle of a group of ladies, talking in a rather excited manner.

Everyone calls him a handsome boy. He has a fine figure and bearing, and sufficient conversation ready at a moment's notice to make people think him clever. His face is one which women instinctively admire, with its blue eyes, fair moustache, and curly light brown hair.

Only those who are intimate with him know that the calm reserve and stand-offish air, which attracts so many people, is the result of natural shyness and a retiring disposition.

"It is not his fault," I answer, rather hotly. "She turned him away."

"Why?"

"Because she made a point of his coming this afternoon, and he did it with very bad grace. I don't know what's come over Jamieson lately. He seems haggard and worn and out of spirits."

"I hope they won't break it off," says Gardner, taking up a vase of violets and playing with them.

"Break what off?" I inquired, rather absently.

"Their engagement."

"They are not engaged, my dear fellow. I thought everyone knew that."

For a moment it looks as if Gardner is going to faint. He turns white, and his hand trembles so that the water upsets from the vase.

"Why not?" he asks, with a queer little shake in his voice, which confirms my suspicions.

I am dumfounded. I hardly know what to say.

I begin to stammer.

"It is an understood thing, of course. They have been brother and sister to one another all their lives. Everyone takes it for granted that they will marry, but nothing definite is settled yet."

A little indrawn breath of pain escapes him. I begin to understand why Gardner has been abroad so long. How blind I have been.

"Go on," he says.

"There's nothing more. She mistakes his natural reserve for pride, and naturally will not be the first to make advances. Her manner terrifies him. Jamieson, of course, is as poor as a

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church mouse, and this makes it more difficult for him. He seems to have no confidence in himself. One word from her would bring him to his knees at once. At least, so people think."

I glance at Gardner when I finish.

"I see. It is simply a question of time, then?"

I nod and turn away. The look on his face haunts me. Miss Temple, the celebrated lady doctor, is already preparing to go. Some of the ladies, talking to Jamieson, laughingly push him forward. He colours and stands his ground, trying to look unconscious.

As she reaches the door, Miss Temple turns round and gives him an unmistakable look. He shakes hands with his hostess at once and follows her out into the hall, frowning.

"There is something on the dear boy's mind," an old lady observes.

"Gardner has come back," says someone else. It is evident that other people have been more observant than your humble servant.

Miss Temple turns as she hears Jamieson's step behind her.

"Will you drive home with me, Guy?" she asks, raising her eyes to him with a half pleading expression and an unexpected blush. His only answer is a little sullen nod, and he follows her down the steps rather ungraciously.

They drive for some time in silence. She is waiting for him to speak but his eyes are fixed on the window, and she leans back in the carriage with almost imperceptibly heightened colour.

Presently he shivers and turns up the collar of his coat.

"You are cold," she exclaims anxiously, bending forward and laying her hand on his arm.

"No, thank you," he answers shortly; but he shivers again and his teeth chatter unmistakably.

She offers him some wraps in the carriage, but he only laughs unnaturally and shakes his head.

"What is the matter with you, Guy?"

"Nothing," — shortly. "Only when you make such a fuss about a fellow coming you might find a word to say to him."

"I didn't want you to come if you were going to make such a favour of it."

"I am sorry I did then."

"So am I."

After this there is silence for some time. Both of them are rather ashamed. Marion, however, is the first to mend the breach.

"Guy!"

"Well!"

"What has been the matter with you during the last few weeks? You are so altered."

"Nothing, thank you."

"But there is," she persists. "You can't hide it from me. Why didn't you wish to come this afternoon?"

His eyes are still fixed on the window.

When he does speak it is in a voice so low that it is scarcely audible.

"Because my sister is dying, if you want to know," he says slowly. "She won't have a nurse or anyone, and we can't afford another servant. She cannot bear the thought of my leaving her room even for a second."

Marion is inexpressibly touched by the piteous cadence of his voice. She is filled with regret at her own selfishness.

"Why did you not tell me before? Oh, I am so sorry for you, Guy," she murmurs.

A softer light creeps into his eyes as she speaks, and he turns and touches her hand gratefully and smiles. Her face is wet with tears.

A change seems to have come over Marion. Perhaps she never realised before how poor her old friend was. Perhaps it never occurred to her what a deep gulf separated them—to a proud man like Guy it might be for ever.

For a moment a terrible inward fight is raging. The proud spirit strikes at last upon a limit which it cannot overpass, and her heart seems to swell into an ineffable softness, and yielding, Marion turns suddenly to her companion, and exclaims:

"Guy, whenever you like I will come and stay."

It is impossible to describe what those words cost her; in that moment everything is sacrificed to what has become the absorbing passion of her life.

Jamieson is thunderstruck. He gasps for breath, and leans back heavily.

"What do you mean, Marion?"

She notices his agitation, and attributes the effect to its most natural cause. An overwhelming sense of perfect happiness steals over her. A beautiful dream has become a sweeter reality. It is almost too good to be true. She laughs softly and bends towards him with flushed cheeks and blazing eyes.

"Guy, there is no reason why your sister should die! I believe that I could cure her if you will let me try. But she

"Will you drive home with me, Guy?" she asks, raising her eyes to him.

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will want years of careful watching and constant nursing. Why should we not be married at once and then——"

She breaks off abruptly, for Jamieson has raised both hands with a piteous gesture.

Still he cannot find words to utter; still her figure is swimming before his eyes; still that sinking sensation which seems tugging at his heart. Even in his wildest moments he has never dreamt of marriage with Marion Temple. Such a termination of their friendship had not occurred to him. It is the unattainable. Theirs is Affection not Love. Besides——

In an instant she notices that something is the matter with him. His whole body is quivering and his teeth are chattering again.

"Guy, are you so cold? Are you ill?" she asks.

"No, no!" he answers, in a low voice, regarding her with a curious look which fills her with fear. "It is not that—only—only—I have never thought of marriage."

It is impossible to mistake his faltering tone. She stares at him as if she could hardly believe her ears. For a moment it seems as if life and everything is near its ending. A terrible feeling of loneliness fills her heart, making her tremble with emotion and anguish.

The precious dreams which she has nursed in the bottom of her heart are betrayed, and they were undivined, unsuspected, and unasked for!

It is only by a most violent effort that she conquers her grief.

"I beg your pardon, Guy—I did not understand," she falters, feeling thoroughly unnerved, and so angry with herself that she can hardly speak.

Jamieson is, of course, powerfully moved by the signs of her agitation. Her love for him—her words of hope about his sister—the thought of what she might do towards saving the poor child's life—all have a susceptible influence on him. He feels ashamed of himself for not loving her; his own disposition enables him to appreciate the humiliation of it all; but he is at a loss to know what to say or how to act.

His sympathy is so enlisted that he suffers for her physically and mentally, but it is only natural that he should feel embarrassed by the secret which he has unconsciously forced from her lips. It upsets the complete understanding which he has deceived himself into believing to exist between them, and it has the effect of making their former relations impossible.

It is a passionate exclamation that escapes him the next minute.

"Marion, how can I ever thank you for your kindness? You don't know how grateful I am to you—but there are circumstances which make marriage out of the question. This will not interfere with our friendship. Promise me that, Marion."

He has seized both her hands, and raised his eyes to her with a supplicating look.

Before she has time to answer, however, the carriage draws up at the house in Grosvenor Place, and Jamieson releases her hands mechanically and opens the door. They both get out, Jamieson to walk home across St. James' Park.

As they part at the foot of the steps he says:

"I need hardly promise you, Marion, I will never breathe a word of this to any living soul."

"About that you may please yourself!" is the answer she makes. "I have not said anything to be ashamed of," and with this she turns and slowly mounts up the broad stone steps.

* * * * *

Dinner is nearly finished at 190, Grosvenor Place. Marion, in an evening dress of some expensive black material, looks her prettiest. The bright flush which her father noticed at tea-time has lasted through the evening. Otherwise she is perfectly composed, and shows no trace of any excitement.

Major Temple, six feet tall, as straight as an Indian, is in many ways a remarkable man. His one failing, if failing it may be called, is overwhelming pride. He is proud of himself, proud of his daughter, and proud of his family standing.

Dessert is on the table. The footmen have withdrawn, and the Major is pouring out his fourth glass of port.

He is evidently startled when Marion says:

"Father, why do you think that Guy Jamieson won't marry me?"

"Eh? What?" he exclaims. "I should very much hope he would never presume to think of such a thing. Won't, indeeed! I have no doubt he would very much like to if he got the chance!"

Marion is cutting herself some grapes.

"No, he wouldn't," she says, calmly.

This takes the Major's breath away.

"What confounded impudence! Bah! My dear child, why do you talk such nonsense? Upon my word I thought you meant it for a minute."

"I do mean it, father."

"What the —— I beg your pardon, my dear. As I was about to say, what in the world makes you think that?"

"He told me so!"

"Told you!" thundered the Major, dropping his eye glasses and leaning forward over the table. "Told you! Do you mean to say you asked him to marry you?"

"No."

The Major leans back and gives a great sigh of relief.

"I told him that I would marry him and——" Marion's napkin has dropped, and she has to stoop to pick it up, which accounts for the sudden flush which mounts to her forehead, "he was very much obliged, but declined the honour."

It is impossible to describe the effect his daughter's words have on the Major. He turns livid, and tries to speak and cannot. He is paralysed.

In the whole of his life his pride has never had a shock like this. That a daughter of his should throw herself at the head of any man is humiliating enough. But a pauper! And to be refused!

The whole of the evening he will not speak another word. Marion says she does not see why a woman is not entitled to propose as much as a man. The Major grunts, and turns his back on her. He cannot sit down for five minutes together. He uses a terrible string of words, and mutters, "Heaven forgive me for swearing."

And begins again.

He is demoralised.

The next day "Dr." Temple calls at the shabby little rooms, where Jamieson and his sister have lived since their father failed. The Major has forbidden her ever to see him again, but she is thoroughly mystified, and determined to get to the bottom of the matter. Guy is unhappy—that is enough for her.

Jamieson is delighted to see her, but more embarrassed than ever. The longer he thinks the matter over, the stronger grows the conviction upon him that he has acted foolishly and unworthily. He cannot see his sister now without an unaccountable feeling of guilt. He is sacrificing, perhaps, her only chance of life, and Marion's love for—he is almost ashamed to acknowledge even to himself what little reason he has. And even that in a week's time may have vanished for ever!

Marion seats herself in the gloomy little drawing-room.

"I want to have a serious talk with you, Guy," she observes, calmly.

His feeling of discomfort increases under her calm stare. He shifts about uneasily, and begins playing with some ornaments on the mantelpiece.

"Well?" he says, and tries to pull himself together, and fails conspicuously. "What can I do for you?"

Marion is perfectly calm and collected, and after the manner of women, her confidence grows at the signs of his uneasiness. This externally. Internally her heart is throbbing unmercifully. Her love for the tall, well-built man leaning in front of her is so great that at times it almost threatens to overpower her. Jamieson, however, sees nothing of this.

"Well?" he repeats, wondering what in the world can have brought her to call after yesterday's scene.

"Guy, I am going to ask you rather a rude question. But I want to know! Why did you say that you could not marry me yesterday?"

"Really, Marion, you must forgive me if I refuse to be cross-questioned on the subject."

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"You love someone else, of course?" she observes calmly. And for the life of him he cannot help dropping his eyes before her glance, which seems to read his very soul. She has been his only friend and adviser so long that he can hardly resent her manner.

"And if I do?" half defiantly.

"Then you might believe I am still sufficiently interested in you to wish to know her name."

Jamieson feels all his reserve melting before the sympathetic light which burns in her eyes, and a sudden longing steals over him to share the secret of his heart with someone else. So he bends forward, and says in a very quiet voice:

"Olive Latimer."

A little gasp escapes Marion, and for a moment she turns white as death, and leans back in her chair. The next instant she has taken his hand in her own, and is saying, warmly:

"Let me congratulate you, Guy; she is one of the sweetest girls I know."

His whole face lights up at her words. He begins thanking her in a torrent of eager sentences, and then he suddenly stops, and exclaims:

"But all this is rather premature. It is no use talking about it——"

"Yes, it is," she interrupts. "Tell me all about it—quickly," she adds, with sudden eagerness. "Are you engaged?"

"No—not yet," he falters, and turns red. "To tell you the truth, Marion, I have not seen her since she was staying with you last Christmas."

"Do you—do you think that she loves you, Guy?"

"Marion, how can I tell? Only I know that I cannot live without her!"

"Have you written to her?"

Jamieson confesses that he has not. He has written hundreds of letters and torn them up. He does not know how to begin or how to end.

"I suppose you know that she has gone to Paris as a governess to Lady Gordon's children?"

Jamieson nods.

"Yes, Lilian told me. They write to one another sometimes."

"And that they are going to India, perhaps for five or ten years at the end of this week?"

Another nod—this time because he cannot trust himself to speak.

Marion gets up suddenly and faces him.

"Do you mean, Guy, that you are going to let her set sail without a word?"

"What can I do?"

"Do! Go out and see her, of course!"

"I can't," he replied bitterly, dropping his hands.

"*Can't?*"

"It is impossible to leave my sister with no one in the house. I have to do everything for her. I must wait—that is all."

His voice suddenly quivered, and he drops his face in his hands.

Marion presses her hands to her heart. For a moment she sways slightly, and the room seems to dance before her eyes. Then she draws herself up with a queer, determined little smile.

"I suppose," she says, "that you could trust Lilian to Dr. Temple while you went?"

Poor Jamieson! He cannot believe his ears. Her words give him a new hope. Her goodness almost overcomes him. Marion's face is flushed. She is singing a snatch of a gay little tune, and crying.

He shifts about uneasily, and begins playing with some ornaments on the mantelpiece.

* * *

Five days have swept by. It is evening, and Marion is sitting over a large fire in the drawing-room. At 190, Grosvenor Place the Major is pacing up and down his library in a terrible temper. "Doctor" Temple cannot help smiling at the thought of his anger.

Her face has altered even in the short time since we saw her last. She looks thin, pale and haggard. Her heart is broken.

Upstairs Lilian is sleeping peacefully for the first time for six months. "Doctor" Temple's care has done wonders for her. She is already on the way to recovery.

Suddenly a street door is opened, and shuts again noiselessly, and the next moment Jamieson bursts into the room. His face is shining from the cold, his eyes are sparkling; he has

been going about for the last few days on wings, and he tries desparately hard not to laugh outright.

He comes straight to Marion's chair, and takes her hand in his. She has risen, and stands by his side on the hearth.

"How is Lilian?" he asks eagerly.

"I think she is better—yes, decidedly better already—Guy, tell me. How did you get on?"

He is so full of happiness that he can hardly speak. He lays both hands on her shoulders, and looks down into her eyes smiling.

"Oh, Marion! she has promised to marry me at once. She has loved me all this time, and if it had not been for you—you——" He stops abruptly, for "Doctor" Temple reels backwards, and falls fainting to the ground.

* * * * *

Two days later Gardner comes to my room at breakfast time. He has brought an atlas under his arm, and I notice the hard, set look on his face which has haunted me.

"Come to Africa next week?" he asks, helping himself to a brandy and soda, which is unconscionable at that hour of the day. "I can't stand life in London any longer."

I don't know what it is that tempts me to accept. Perhaps I cannot bear the thought of meeting Jamieson, just at present.

Half an hour later we have settled everything, and Gardner sends out my man for a cab.

He is at the door when I suddenly remember he may not have heard that Jamieson is engaged.

"By the way," I observe, "Jamieson is not going to marry 'Doctor' Temple after all."

In two strides he is by my side, and has grasped me by the shoulder.

"What do you mean?" he asks breathlessly.

"He is engaged to someone else."

"And Miss Temple?"

"Poor girl! I suppose she will devote herself body and soul to her profession! Have another brandy and soda."

"Jim!"

"How much? Say when."

"Jim!"

"Hullo, old man, what's the matter?"

"Nothing—but—I have just remembered I can't possibly go to Africa this year."

At that moment you might have knocked me down with a feather. But I knew what it meant. And I was right. Before six months were over "Doctor" Temple abandoned her title for ever, and assumed that of Mrs. Gardner.

"Did she love him?"

"Well, there are people who say that a woman can love twice."

Used to Shocks.

Judkins: "A train in the North of England was thrown down a fifty-feet embankment yesterday afternoon." Mrs. Judkins: "Gracious! How many were killed?" Mr. Judkins: "Not any. Luckily the train was occupied entirely by football men."

Hard Luck.

Not long ago an old pioneer, who had lived in Texas in the days of the early colonists, was boasting of the good old times. "Why, sir, I was once offered a league of land for a pair of old boots." "Didn't you take it?" said the party addressed. "No, sir, I didn't." "Poor land I reckon?" "Why, bless your heart, sir, it was the best land outdoors. Grass five feet high, a clear stream of water running through it, and an undeveloped silver mine in one corner." "And why in thunder didn't you make the trade," "Because," said the old man, in a regretful tone of voice—"Because I didn't have the boots!"

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The sum of 5s. a day is going to be paid to someone—perhaps yourself.

This 5s. a day will mean:

TO YOUNG GIRLS:

Enough to buy yourself pretty frocks and heaps of chocolates, with a balance to give to mother to put by for you until you are married.

TO SINGLE GIRLS:

Provision against poverty, or, if in comfortable circumstances, additional pocket money.

TO ENGAGED GIRLS:

Enough to buy your trousseau, or to save up for some article you have always been in want of.

TO MARRIED WOMEN:

Enough to get yourself any clothes that are too expensive for your husband to buy, or to save up for the little ones.

And all this, not for a week, or a month, or a year, but for the whole of your life.

This means that if you are now fifteen years of age and live until you are seventy-five you will receive the colossal sum of £5,400, which is by far the most colossal prize ever won by anybody.

Full particulars of this scheme appear in the "Royal Magazine."

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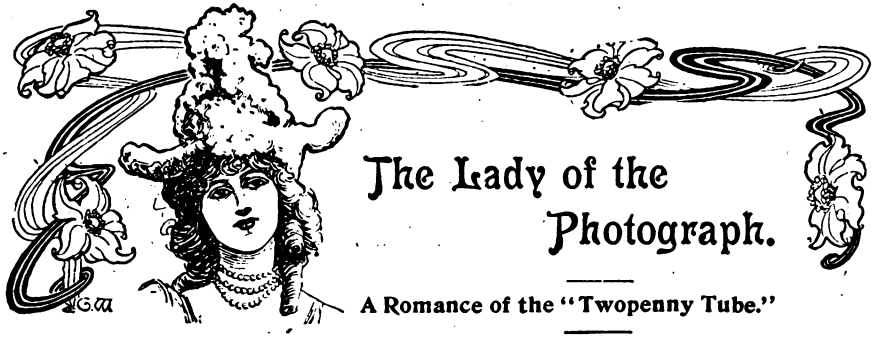

The Lady of the Photograph.

A Romance of the "Twopenny Tube."

Chapman first saw her in a carriage on the "Tube." There was nothing at all unusual in the circumstance, yet to him it seemed freighted with romance.

He had been reading the morning paper assiduously ever since he got in, and had been only dreamily aware of the fact that fresh passengers entered at each station.

Glancing up carelessly as he finished one section of the paper, his eyes fixed themselves aimlessly upon the window at his left.

Suddenly his indifference vanished. A startled intentness held his gaze riveted to the window, for there he beheld the reflection of a wonderfully witching face. Such a face! There was a strange fascination, an irresistible charm about it that thrilled his imagination with an indefinable joy.

Then the truth broke upon him that this face corresponded glowingly to that of the radiant ideal which, ever since boyhood, his dreamy fancy had unconsciously cherished.

The revelation flashed upon him just as the reflected eyes turned and met his fully in the window.

How long Chapman might have sat gazing into their amber depths had not the owner quickly averted them may not be determined.

His next impulse, of course, was to turn and view the young woman herself. She sat diagonally across from him, two seats ahead. Without staring he saw that the window had told no lies. As a reality she was fully as captivating as her image had appeared.

He observed her trim blue tailor-made coat and skirt and her grey hat, but was prevented from taking further notes by the sound of the guard's voice calling his station. It was a rude awakening to the harshness of Fate.

All day the memory of the experience haunted him. He could not banish from his mind the recollection of that full glance deep into those long-lashed amber eyes.

It was three months later that Chapman, entering a post-office, saw a girl in blue standing at one of the desks preparing to send a telegram.

Her head was lowered and he could not as yet perceive her features, but a swift hope held him breathless, as, stationed near her, he took up a blank and simulated a deep interest in the message he was sending.

She raised her head—Chapman's pen ceased writing, and clattered to the floor. It was she of the amber eyes!

He picked up the pen and continued his blind scribbling. Just how his message was worded he never knew. His attention followed another channel. He noticed that the girl wrote and crumpled several blanks before she finally completed a telegram that suited her. He saw her finally deliver it to the clerk, pay for it, and return to the desk where her muff and small parcels lay. Then, before he could realise it, she had gathered up her belongings and was leaving the office.

With a pang of helpless regret he gazed after her. Then his eyes caught a glimpse of something left among the telegraph forms—something that the girl must have forgotten. It was a large yellow envelope. Chapman possessed himself of it without delay and hastened to the door. But the blue costume and grey hat were nowhere in sight.

Chapman returned to the desk and stood meditating. The envelope bore no address whatever. There was a card of some sort inside—possibly a photograph. His eager fingers tore away the covering. Hope leapt within him again, for gazing into his were the pictured eyes he had learnt to know so well.

Her likeness—hers! And in his very possession. The joy of it went to his head and prevented further calculations for the moment. Then the real significance of the situation dawned upon him. This was the coveted clue vouchsafed him by a benignant destiny. Given this chain he had that which led to the fulfilment of his heart's desire.

In one second's time Chapman had mentally surmounted the difficulty of discovering the girl's address; had presented the photograph; had made her acquaintance, and was fairly launched upon a most delightful courtship.

Then his common sense asserted itself. By what miraculous means were all these things to be accomplished?

He examined the photograph and perceived a single name on the back—a name scarcely discernible in the dark grey colouring of the cardboard: Marion. He repeated it under his breath.

Yes, but Marion who, Marion what? He chafed at the inadequacy of the information. Then a sudden idea gleamed upon his perplexed brain. There were the crumpled telegraph forms!

He lost no time in unfolding and reading them. The sight of several half-finished sentences, but no address of any kind, rewarded his presumption.

He sighed impatiently, put the photograph in his pocket, and departed. Various ideas suggested themselves as he absently threaded his way through the busy streets. He would interview the photographer. He would advertise in the lost and found columns of the newspapers. He would leave no stone unturned in his determination to pursue this matter to the end.

However, it is one thing to plan success and another to achieve it. His repeated efforts to follow up the clue proved utterly futile. Weeks and months went by and yet he had discovered nothing further concerning the fair girl whose photograph had accidentally fallen into his possession. Yet he did not despair.

The fact of having in his keeping the photograph of this radiantly charming girl—this girl whom he loved already with a dreamer's devotion—seemed a sign, a sure promise to him of ultimate triumph.

It was one year later that Chapman, running across a former chum of his who had recently married and was living in the suburbs, accepted an invitation to dine at his house on the following Sunday.

As he set out for his friend's residence, he wondered musingly what sort of a woman he had chosen for his life-mate. Frank Eldridge had been a fellow of exacting tastes. Chapman smiled a little as he recollected the numerous discussions they had often indulged in concerning womankind.

As he waited in the small drawing-room, his appreciative eyes took in the dainty beauty of the decorations. Then all suddenly his glance halted. A framed photograph stood upon the mantelpiece—a photograph that startled him into abrupt attention. He stood gazing upon it in stunned incredulity. There was no mistaking these features. The likeness was an exact duplicate of the picture in his possession!

Before he could recover from his shock, the voice of Eldridge sounded at the door. "Hello, Chapman, old man! Glad to see you."

Perhaps the host wondered at the abstracted response

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that greeted him. An awful idea was bearing down upon Chapman's brain—an idea that benumbed him with its dread significance.

"Mrs. Eldridge will soon be down," pursued his friend cheerfully. Then, at the sound of soft footfalls, "Here she is now."

A young woman with amber eyes and soft brown hair had entered the room. Before Chapman's despairing gaze a lofty air castle of one year's building tumbled into ruins.

How he ever got through with that dismal dinner he could not have told. How he managed to maintain his equanimity and muster up an exaggerated amiability, was incomprehensible to him when he afterwards reflected upon it.

Gradually, however, he grew rational enough to berate himself mentally for a consummate simpleton. Why had he ever dared to entertain such wild hopes, in the first place? Did anything in this life ever turn out as human beings hoped? Did dreams ever count for anything? Bah! He had been a fool.

He drifted into a cynical train of thought, the while he struggled to keep up an interest in his hostess' lively chat. After all, oven she was a disappointment, or else she had changed greatly in a year. Her face lacked the witchery he had seen in it at first. Really, her eyes were not quite the same. Could it be possible that his imagination had changed her to such an extent? He grew dully submissive to the inevitable.

The lights were turned on and music was suggested. Chapman nodded with a heavy acquiescence. What was it his hostess was saying?

"I am expecting my sister over this evening. Marion is quite musical and likes to entertain."

Marion! The name darted like a meteor through the gloom of Chapman's reflections.

"Your sister?" he repeated, almost gaspingly.

"Yes, my twin sister. The resemblance is very striking. People are always——"

A ring of the door-bell interrupted her. Someone was being admitted. Chapman dared not even breathe. His head whirled. He raised his eyes as the portière parted.

There stood his lady of the photograph!

Angela Morgan.

Robert Lane's Trial Trip.

A New Way of Telling the Old, Old Story.

Elizabeth Stone had been afflicted all her life with a deep ambition to be somebody. She was undoubtedly clever. Everyone said so; but her talent was evenly distributed in half a dozen ways. In short, she was qualified to make some man intensely happy, yet nothing was farther from her intentions.

She analysed herself thoroughly, and at last concluded that the world of literature needed her, and that Fame stood beckoning with outstretched hands.

Now, Elizabeth never did anything by halves, and, accordingly, the little west chamber underwent a singular change. An old oak desk, that had been her father's, found itself once more in favour; a couch and a few cushions, a reading lamp, and a shelf of reference books gave the place quite the air of a study. A few good posters, and a head of William Morris, together with a brown stone jug of ink and a ream of paper completed the equipment.

She contemplated the purchase of a typewriter. Of course she couldn't use one, but its atmosphere was good. On second thoughts, however, she concluded to wait and buy it with the proceeds of her first story.

Weeks of hard work followed. Her correspondence increased twofold. Letters came from all points of the compass, but their contents were always the same. She could read them with her eyes shut.

> "The editors of ——— are glad to have had the opportunity of examining the inclosed manuscript, and regret that they do not find it suitable for publication."

Still, Fame stretched forth her shadowy hands, and Elizabeth toiled on.

Early in the spring a new factor in her work appeared. This was Robert Lane. He belonged to that class of men that women abominate. He was too big and good-looking to awake their slightest sympathy; too ambitionless and happy-go-lucky to command their admiration, and, above all, he was a firm believer in that old, exploded theory, that a woman is more heart than brain, and that she really needs his love.

Still, he had redeeming traits, and Elizabeth, who was beginning to look at all men as "material," concluded that he might be worth cultivating. She would make a thorough study of him, at any rate, for her art's sake.

The next story was sold. The next and the next went to market and brought back their returns.

"Betty," said her brother one day, "what do you know of love? Not an atom, and yet that little sketch would make one think you'd felt it all!"

The weeks melted away. Elizabeth had never been so happy before. Of course, it was simply the realisation of her own strength, and the knowledge that the world held out a welcome.

As for Robert, he was a splendid subject! They walked and drove together in all her leisure hours; they took long trips out into the country, and sat till twilight in the tall, deep grass, and did a thousand foolish things.

Elizabeth wore her most becoming gowns, because—well, just because! She baked all sorts of toothsome things, she never knew just why; and the stories got better and better as the days went by.

The year was beginning to grow old. The asters and the wild clematis had held their autumn *fête*, and the leaves had danced until they lay, tired out, in russet heaps.

Robert had proposed spending an afternoon in the woods, and they had started with the coffee-pot for chaperone, for it was their last picnic of the year.

They followed the brook up towards its head, and laid the cloth among the ferns like happy children.

"Betty," he said at last, "what makes you good to me?"

The girl sat, looking past him, up to where the tops of the trees were turning pink against the sky. The man bent towards her. She laughed, but there was a tremble in it, and still she looked away.

"I haven't been good," she said, shaking her head slowly, "only to—myself!"

A great gladness came to Robert's eyes. "Oh, Betty," he said, "I——"

"Yes, only to myself," she went on hurriedly. "You see,

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I needed you in my work, you know. I—I—oh, don't you understand, I wanted you to study from; that's all!"

Lane drew in his breath sharply, as if something had hurt him, and looked at the girl in a dull, stupid way.

The light on the tree-tops was changing now. The pink was turning into violet. Perhaps it was the reflection that made Elizabeth so white.

Robert rose at last, slowly, as a sick man does, and she watched him as he went down the path for the trap. Mechanically she gathered up the fragments of their little feast, and put them away; then sat waiting with her hands clasped tightly.

It was some time before he came. The trees had grown cold and grey, with deep purple shadows upon their faces, and Robert's face was like them.

He helped her into the trap without a word, and they drove silently homeward. The road seemed long and lonely, and Elizabeth was cold.

A choir of crickets had commenced their twilight serenade. Lights began to glimmer from the little houses along the road, and children's voices reached them now and then, like memory, through the years.

"By Jove!" said Robert Lane, when they were nearly in the town. "I almost forgot! I'm going away next week."

Elizabeth felt the blood going to her brain; her ears rang.

"You see," he went on, "my holiday has been a long one, and I must be getting back to work. Old ties and old friends are calling me, and, after all, 'there's no place like home,' is there?" He glanced at Elizabeth. She was sitting erect. Her lips were compressed, and her eyes had grown strangely dark. There was a suspicion of a twinkle in Robert's own eyes as he continued:

"We've been good comrades, you and I, and I'll never forget the jolly times we've had together. You've quite won me over to your theories, too. This talk of woman's realm is all old-fogeyism! Bread and biscuits, and babies, may have interested our great grandmothers, but to women of to-day, with their advanced 'mental concepts,' it's all twaddle! You've got the right stuff in you—no sentimental nonsense. Just believe in yourself, and go ahead, and you'll come up with the best of us!"

Elizabeth did not sleep that night. She sat up, staring out of the window at the stars. The coffee had been a little strong, she told herself. That dull, miserable pain about her heart was indigestion. A letter came from Robert a week later. He had been so busy at the last, and there had not been time to call on even the oldest friends.

He wished her success in her work, and hoped that some day in future years their paths would cross again. He had a secret to tell her too. On the night of the fifteenth he would be with the one woman he could love. He would ask her to be his wife. Would she, Elizabeth, remember him, and pray for him, and wish him well?

Elizabeth Stone sat in her study with the letter in her hands. She read it once, twice. Of course, she did not care! Why should she? Their friendship had been purely platonic; she had found in him what she wanted—a model. He would be one tiny stone in the great wall of fame with which she would surround her life. She was happy, she told herself, but she laughed as a woman does when her heart is breaking.

On the fifteenth! It was just a week now. All through the days that followed she worked with fierce determination, and perhaps it was because she was so weary that she lay at night with her heart pressed hard against the pillow. Once she awoke with a cry, her arms outstretched in the darkness. It was only a pitiful longing for fame, of course.

The evening of the fifteenth dragged itself round, and Elizabeth went into her study and closed the door. She commenced a dozen things—threw them each in turn aside, and sat staring unseeingly into space. The clock ticked noisily, and the atmosphere of the room seemed to stifle her. She opened the window. Cool night air flooded in, heavy with the breath of roses. The arbour, where John used to smoke, was white with roses still.

Moved by an irresistible impulse, she slipped out, and, closing the door behind her, hurried down the path.

The arbour looked forlorn and lonely. A band of checkered moonlight fell through the lattice to the vacant seat, and Elizabeth saw it through a mist of sudden tears. She ran past—on down the drive into the kitchen garden. The gooseberry bushes caught at her frock, and a twig from a plum tree fastened itself unheedingly in her hair.

* * * * *

A cab stopped at the corner. It had come in haste from the station. As the occupant sprang out, a passer-by grasped him by the shoulders and turned him suddenly round.

"Bob Lane, as I'm a sinner!" said the captor. "Why, we thought you had gone home again."

"So I did, for four days," replied the traveller, laughing; "a flying visit, I'll admit; but, as you see, I have an appointment with your sister—Elizabeth."

"Betty?" asked her brother. "Why, she never told us. She's gone off somewhere, too. Mother's been looking for her. She's not in the study nor——"

A singular light had been creeping into Robert's eyes.

"I'll find her," he said quietly, and was gone.

He tiptoed across the lawn to the arbour. "Elizabeth," he called softly, "Elizabeth." There was no reply. A breeze rustled faintly in the leaves and set the shadows to dancing. "Betty," he called again.

* * * *

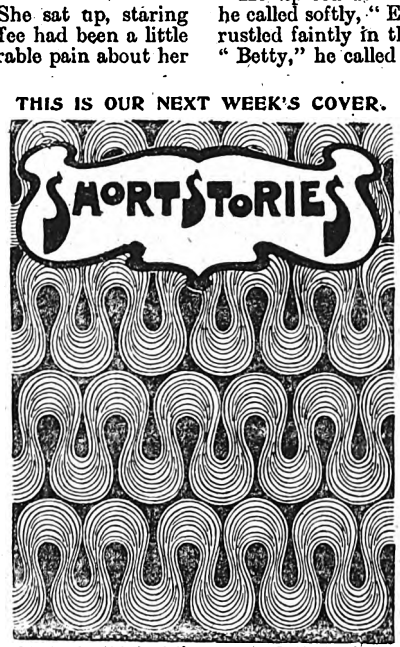
Out in the kitchen garden, Elizabeth was pacing restlessly. "Just once," she pleaded with herself, "just for one little minute, to sit where he used to be!" She paused irresolutely—half turned about—paused again, then fled up the drive.

She did not see the figure in the shadow. She did not see his outstretched arms until they were folded close about her, and then——

An hour later the moon peered into the arbour to see why they had grown so still, but the reason was such an old one that she wasn't interested.

HELEN E. WRIGHT.

THIS IS OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER.



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IT is estimated that there are two thousand four hundred disorders to which the human frame is liable. When a man is laid up with the rheumatism he is apt to think that the entire number has struck him in concert.

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That Painful Smile.

For heroic and vain endeavours to look pleased, nothing can equal the expressions of two girls compelled to dance with each other on account of scarcity of men.

The Advance of Civilisation.

It is rumoured that an indiarubber omnibus is to be the next thing, and its advantages will be that when quite full it will hold a couple more.

Answered.

He (a new arrival at seaside hotel, to unknown lady): "Aw—have you been a captive in this—er—menagerie?" She: "You can hardly call me a captive; perhaps 'keeper' would be better, for I am the wife of the showman, and have to help feed the animals."

They Don't Speak Now.

Miss Swansdown (at the ball): "What did you do with my shawl, Mr. Peterkin? I gave it to you to keep half an hour ago." Peterkin (producing a slip of paper): "Good gracious, what have I done! In a fit of absent-mindedness I took it out and pawned it."

Quite Another Thing.

"I am not wealthy," he said; "but if the devotion of a true and tender heart goes for anything with you, Miss Clara——" "It goes well enough with me, Mr. Spoonbill," interrupted the fair girl, with a pensive look on her face; "but how will it go with the grocer?"

He Knew his Friend.

Mudge: "I was looking over my top-coat to-day, and I find that the moth has nearly ruined it." Yabsley: "Why don't you sue them for damages?" Mudge: "Sue the moths for damages? You talk like a child." Yabsley: "I didn't mean the moths; I meant the pawnbrokers."

Through French Eyes.

Scotsman: "What'll y' hae?" Frenchman: "I vill take a drop of contradiction." Scotsman: "What's that?" Frenchman: "Vell, you put in de whisky to make it strong, de water to make it weak, de lemon to make it sour, and de sugar to make it sweet. Den you say to your friend, 'Here's to you!' and you take it yourself."

She Cracked a Commandment.

A little girl who was walking with her mother was tempted by the sight of a basket of oranges, exposed for sale, and quietly took one; but afterwards, stricken by conscience, returned it. On her return home she was discovered in tears, and on being asked the cause of her sorrow replied, sobbing: "Mamma, I haven't broken any of the commandments, but I think I've cracked one a little."

Hard on the Neighbours.

"Why, you'd better knock the door down. What do you want?" "Don't let me wake any of your family. I'm just using your knocker to wake the people next door. I've come home rather late and got locked out, d'ye see, and they have no knocker."

Reason Enough.

Tubbs (recounting his experience at a musical party a few evenings previous): "They did not even ask me to sing." Miss Whitelye (placidly): "You've sung there before, haven't you?" "Yes, once. Why?" "Oh, nothing!"

Too Much to Expect.

"Tommy," said his mother, "do you think you'll get a prize at the school for being good?" "No, ma," said Tommy. "Why not, sir?" asked his father sternly, laying down the paper. "Because they don't give any," answered Tommy meekly.

Their First Quarrel.

"I am going down to the river to drown myself," said she tearfully. "All right, my dear; start at once if you want to," said he coolly. "It is raining, and it would spoil my new dress; but I am going just as soon as it stops, you see if I don't!"

He'd Seen Them Before.

"Better not wait for Charley any longer. You know what it is when a fellow is calling on his girl." "Ah, there they are now! He is just bidding her good-night." "All right; let us go and have a game of billiards. We'll just have time."

Spring Chicken Again.

"Waiter," said a young civil engineer, after vainly struggling with knife and fork for fully ten minutes on an alleged spring chicken, "bring me a chisel, a steel wedge, and a heavy hammer, for I'm interested now, and am determined to see of what material this thing is made."

Maintaining His Reputation.

Mary: "George, I have heard you spoken of frequently as a successful business man." "I am that. Why?" "Well, considering the fact that you have been visiting me for three years, I think you should maintain your reputation and talk business." He maintained his reputation.

He Liked Steam.

"Steam is a great thing," remarked a French traveller in a railway carriage to his *vis-à-vis*. "So it is," was the reply; "I owe my fortune to it." "Monsieur is manager of a company?" "No." "Engineer, perhaps?" "No; I have lost a number of relatives by railway accidents."

To Insure Domestic Bliss.

"So you are going to marry that small, wheezy, consumptive-looking specimen of a man, are you?" said one girl to another. "I really don't see what you can see in him to love." "Mary," said her friend, "Mary, your father is a small man, isn't he?" "Yes," was the reply; "but what of that?" "Nothing, except that if he wasn't small it would be doubtful if your mother would be the master. I'm going to marry that small man because I'm fond of having my own way, and won't accept any risks."

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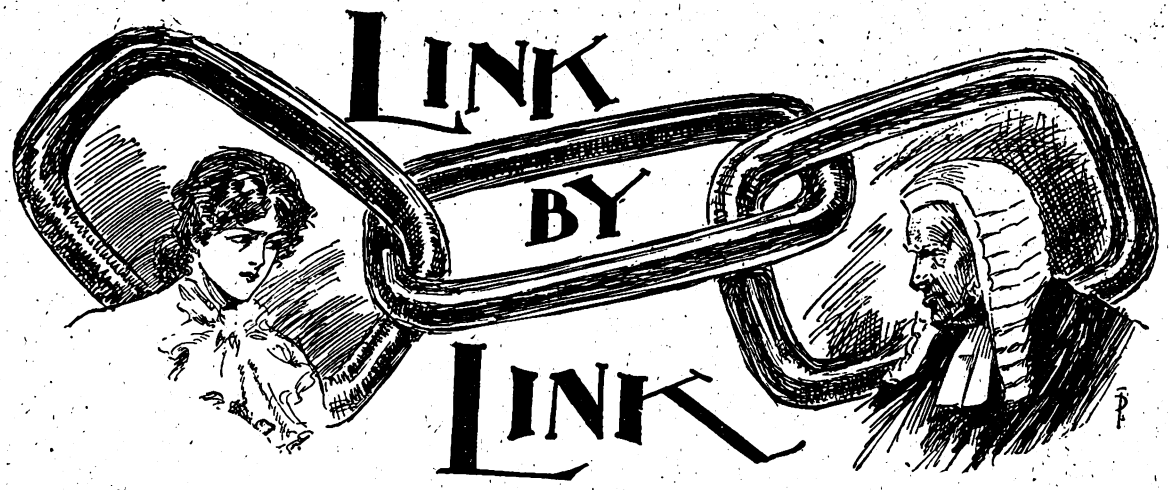

Principal Characters in the Story.

Gerald Mortimer: Of Moulstone Manor, in love with Nina Penhurst.

Mrs. Mortimer: Gerald's mother.

Dr. Branksome: Medical attendant at Moulstone asylum, a great friend of Gerald.

Anthony (or Felix) Cordelvin: An inmate of Moulstone asylum, who was found murdered.

Nina Penhurst: Governess at Moulstone Manor, a distant relative of Cordelvin.

Roderick Vanstone: Nina's guardian. He lives at Streatham, and has under his charge a man named Cordelvin, of weak intellect, whose estate, held in trust for Nina, he manages.

Stephen Vanstone: Roderick Vanstone's son.

The woman in the dark blue cloak: She was seen at Moulstone on the night of the murder, and has acted rather suspiciously since.

Stebbings and Burge: Men employed by Vanstone.

Inspector Trench: Of Scotland Yard, who is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin.

CHAPTER XXI.
A New Prison House.

How long Gerald Mortimer remained unconscious after that heavy blow on the head, he did not know. When he recovered, it was to find himself in complete darkness. He was lying on his side; his bonds had been re-bound; a rough straw heap formed his couch. That was all he could realise in his first waking moments.

Presently, however, to his sensitive nostrils arose a musty, humid odour such as can only proceed from damp earth. An explanation suggested itself to Gerald's mind, and he rose quickly, and sidled along the wall so that his knuckles should touch it. They encountered a rough, clammy plaster surface, and he felt his suspicions confirmed. He was in an underground cellar, removed there, doubtless, for his greater security.

It was indeed a dismal prison-house. The earthy vapour rising from the damp of the floor and walls crept through his clothes and struck with chill touch right into his bones. Owing to his recent period of oblivion and the utter darkness which prevailed in the place, it was impossible for him to think with certainty as to what hour it was. But, conjecturing that he could not have remained unconscious very long, and failing, after listening intently for some time, to detect any sound of voice or movement overhead, he was led to believe, correctly as it happened, that it was very early morning.

In the circumstances, it was useless to shout or otherwise draw attention to himself. Moreover, he was still feeling sufficiently weak and dazed to allay any desire for further violence or activity at the time. So he was forced to the inevitable course of waiting till daylight. For hours, then, he paced the narrow confines of the cellar, or cell, as it seemed to him, striving by movement to shake off the tendency to shiver which the dampness had induced. He walked till his limbs ached, and then, in very exhaustion, threw himself down on the straw-heap in the corner, and to his after-astonishment, managed to sleep.

The rattling of a chain and the sliding of a bolt, obstinate through rust, awoke him. The moment after, Ned Stebbings and Burge appeared, bearing a lantern and food. The altered conditions of his imprisonment were emphasised by the nature of the latter. Yesterday his breakfast had consisted of coffee and a quantity of substantial eatables. To-day, a brief glance showed it was bread and water!

"Why am I put down here?" Gerald demanded, with as much indignation as, in his weakness, he could muster.

There was no answer. Stebbings and Burge had been well drilled now as to their part, and maintained an obstinate silence.

"Where is Mr. Vanstone? I want to see him."

But Stebbings kept his teeth closed and his tongue still, taking his place near by with the inevitable revolver ominously held in his right hand. Burge, equally reticent, untied Gerald's hands in silence. Gerald, having spoken two or three times and found it impossible to get any answer, consumed as much of his poor meal as he could, and then once more submitted himself to be bound.

And now, thank Heaven! he was not to be left in darkness. For the two silent gaolers as they retired, left the lighted lantern standing in a corner. It was a small mercy for which Gerald felt grateful.

By the light of the lantern the prisoner could now see the kind of apartment in which he was confined. It was a cellar as he had already conjectured, unusually large and fairly lofty. At one side of it was a small grating about a foot square, but in addition to the bars, Gerald could gather from the feeble rays of daylight which struggled in through a chink, that the aperture had been boarded up from the outside.

"They mean to make sure of me this time," was Gerald's doleful comment, as he realised the absolute hopelessness of any escape. "Oh, if Cordelvin had but been a little quicker in releasing me! I should have been free, free to go where I liked, free to go to Nina!"

From the first conscious moment of his incarceration, the girl for whom he had so recently declared his passionate love, had rarely been absent from his mind. He had thought of her tenderly and longingly, had prayed that the ordeal of anxiety which she was undergoing, and which must have been added to by his inexplicable disappearance, might be lightened by the mercy of Heaven. Buoyed up previously with the hope of speedy release or escape, the separation had not sapped the hope that ever sprang in his breast.

But now, as he gazed around his dismal cell, and realised the helplessness of his case, his heart sank, and with the articulate murmur of Nina's name, the floodgates of his heart opened. A lump, dry and choking, rose in his throat, his brain throbbed and his breast ached. He strove to control his feelings of bitter grief, struggled to combat what threatened to happen, but to no purpose. He, Gerald Mortimer, healthy and strong, and in the prime of manhood, felt his chin fall upon his breast, and he burst into a torrent of scalding tears.

This outward demonstration of grief, as is always the case with a man, was fierce but short-lived. He ceased to cry and his hands being tied, blinked his eyes to dryness.

The morning wore on and midday arrived. Once more Stebbings and Burge appeared, and once more Gerald set himself to discuss the meal set before him, which was of the same beggarly description as the breakfast.

Once more he tried to tempt the men into speaking, but they were obdurate, receiving his questions in sullen silence. At the completion of the meal, however, they changed their ordinary programme. Instead of retiring, Burge stepped out of the cellar and presently returned with a basket of tools, rejoining Stebbings.

A brief conversation between the two men then ensued, after which Burge approached the wall, and presently began drilling two or three holes in a beam which skirted it. Gerald watched the operation idly, as yet unable to divine the meaning of it. From out of the basket Stebbings handed Burge a couple of large strong rings with screws attached, and these Burge firmly affixed to the beam.

The rattle of a chain was next heard, and for the first time it occurred to Gerald that all these careful preparations were for him. Nor was he mistaken. A double chain, having been affixed to the rings in the beam, was attached at the other end to a pair of handcuffs. Then, quietly and expeditiously as an executioner pinioning his victim, Burge once more removed the cords from Gerald's wrists, and snapped the steel handcuffs upon the latter.

Resistance would have been useless, for throughout the operation Ned Stebbings stood ready with the revolver, ever on the alert to use it at the first suggestion of bother.

Thus they left the prisoner, handcuffed and chained to the wall, the outcome of Roderick Vanstone's instructions.

"He nearly got free last night," the elder Vanstone had remarked that morning, "and we must take no more risks."

Gerald stood for some minutes gazing at the lantern which had been again left and renewed with another candle. He was trying to persuade himself that he was dreaming. Then as he realised his experiences were indeed only too real, he burst out into a rueful laugh. The absurdity of a man being imprisoned and chained in a private house, within a mile or two of the heart of London, was too much for his sense of the ludicrous, and, serious as his position was, he could not for the life of him stifle that laugh.

"Why, I might be living in the Middle Ages from my appearance just now," he muttered to himself. "And yet this is the twentieth century. Well, I'm secure enough now. Though Cordelvin should find me here, which is very unlikely, these handcuffs and chains would be a bit beyond him."

The recognition of his greatest trouble, viz., imprisonment, as inevitable, presently caused that trouble to fall a little in the background of his thoughts, and the mitigation wrought by the change, of some of the lesser attendant evils, occurred to him.

"At all events, these steel handcuffs don't cut like the cords, and there's the comfort of having my hands in front of me. Perhaps, too, I shall be allowed to eat my meals alone now, without having those two ruffians looking on the whole time."

In which conjecture he was right, for, when Stebbings brought him in his third meal for the day, he departed at once. Gerald had quite free play for his hands now, so far as eating and drinking were concerned, therefore, the necessity for his temporary release while Stebbings kept guard with the revolver no longer existed.

Stebbings returned about half-an-hour afterwards to clear away the things, and, left to himself, Gerald once more fell into a state of despairing contemplation. How long was this condition of things to go on? What was the intention of the ruffianly Roderick Vanstone? Was he going to keep him there for good, to half-starve and torture him? If such were his resolve, better far if he would kill him outright. But no, Gerald did not want to die. Young as he was, with all the affections of his heart bound up with those of Nina Penhurst, he wanted to live on, for while there was life there was hope. Some wise man had said that, and it was true—it must be true. And yet, what hope could there be for him? Who among all his anxious friends—Nina, his mother, or his other friends—who among them all would know where to look for him? Doubtless by now they were looking for him, scouring the country, inquiring at railway stations, at the ports, wiring his description to places abroad, doing everything in fact that fond hearts could think of. But who among them all would dream that he was shut up in an old house on Streatham Hill? It was such a preposterous position that no one would ever——

Hush! What was that?

The sound of voices in altercation had broken upon his ear. That mere unqualified fact might perhaps have startled him; but as he listened it became apparent to him that among the voices—three or four—one of them betrayed the deep contralto of a woman!

What was more, the voices seemed to proceed from the level of the cellar, coming from the other side of the door by which Stebbings and Burge had entered and departed.

Again the feminine voice came, and now, holding his breath, Gerald was able to catch a word here and there.

"Let me go. . . . thieves. . . . I am not mad. . . .you would kill me. . . .murderers, that's what you are. . . ." The rush of words ended with a wild shriek, there was the sound of a scuffle, the echo of a heavy thud, and of a fall. Then all was quiet, save low murmurings and the soft closing of a door.

Whatever had happened, Gerald could not possibly know. With the outer silence, he breathed again and struggled with grimly-set jaw with his chains, fuming as he realised the uselessness of it all.

Something was wrong, something very wrong. But as to what it was, there was no chance of discovering. He called. There was no answer. Called again, louder this time, but with a like result. No sound broke upon his ears save the dull echo of his own cry. He was powerless. He could only wait, wait, wait.

CHAPTER XXII.

Inspector Trench Visits Streatham Hill.

Constable Jennings, the plain-clothes man, whom Inspector Trench had deputed to follow the woman in the blue cloak, was an admirable type of his order. Not endowed with any extraordinary amount of acumen, imagination, or resource, he was possessed of that doggedness, that persistent "sticking to his post," which counts for so much in his profession.

It was little wonder then that this Casabianca of the force never once gave the woman in blue a chance of eluding him. Whenever her cab slowed down, his followed suit, and whenever hers quickened, his did similarly with clockwork regularity. So they duly reached Streatham Hill, the two cabs stopping some little distance from the old house.

And here perforce the plain-clothes man had to lose sight of his quarry, for she, halting by a side gate in the falling dusk, unlocked it with a key taken from her pocket and passed through, locking it again on the other side.

Jennings could not follow; but this he did not mind.

Fortified with the reflection that so long as she was inside she was safe, and guaranteeing to himself that she couldn't come out without his seeing her, he moved along the road to a corner which commanded a full view of both the gates, cheerfully filled his pipe, leant against the wall, and began to watch and wait.

It didn't matter very much to Jennings if he had to wait one hour or ten. He was used to waiting, and on such jaunts as this invariably provided himself with a day's rations and

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tobacco. So with his pipe between his teeth, he stood there humming, "She wore a wreath of roses"—his favourite air—with the greatest equanimity. Occasionally while he waited he took a stroll across the road, but always with a sidelong glance which enabled him to keep both gates in view all the time. Once a policeman, on whose beat he happened to be standing, wondered why he loitered there, but a peculiar wink and nod from Jennings, in which a whole police dictionary seemed to be expressed, satisfied him and sent him on his way.

He had waited over an hour, and at length his vigil was ended. From out of the gate by which the woman had entered there now issued the familiar blue cloak, and in a twinkling the plain-clothes man was following in its wake at a discreet distance. The wearer of the cloak was carrying a hand-bag now, and walked along some distance before hailing the cab.

Ten seconds later Jennings had entered a similar vehicle and was off in pursuit.

Jennings was not an easy man to surprise, and therefore when the first cab, instead of making towards Clapham, pursued its way along the Kennington Road towards Westminster, it didn't worry Jennings. Not even when he saw the cab pull up outside a small private hotel in the Westminster Bridge Road and the figure in the blue cloak alight, settle with the cabman, and enter the house, did he betray any astonishment. He just vaguely speculated why she hadn't gone home instead, and then, taking up his position at a convenient spot, started his waiting and watching game all over again.

It had lasted two hours. This time and at present there seemed to be no sign of its ending. Jennings wasn't getting impatient, but in his own stolid way he began to think that he ought to get further instructions. Inspector Trench had probably returned to Scotland Yard by now. He would send a message telling him where he was.

He hastily scribbled a note on a page of his pocket-book, tore it out, and then beckoned a policeman who passed presently. Half a minute was sufficient to explain to the uniformed official what was required of him. He jumped into a cab and in five minutes was at Scotland Yard.

Inspector Trench had not returned, but he had telephoned through telling them where he was to be found in Clapham if wanted, and in a brief space of time the note was transported thither and handed to the detective.

"Ho, ho!" murmured that officer on receiving the missive, "no wonder, Dr. Branksome, we've been kept here waiting all this time. I couldn't quite make it out."

"Why, what's up?" inquired the doctor. "What's happened?"

"Why, the woman's gone to a private hotel in the West-

(*Continued on page 640.*)

Immersed in Liquid Poison.

A Horrible Adventure.

A horrible adventure has recently been recounted by Alexander Robert Heffernan, of 53 Archel Road, Fulham, now an ex-constable of the Metropolitan Police Force. It appears that on the afternoon of February 26th, 1897, he was on duty near the Regent's Canal, at a point where the water is rendered highly poisonous by the drainings from chemical and gas works. He was told that a man had jumped in, to commit suicide. Being a noted swimmer, Heffernan dived into the poisonous water without hesitation. For fully twenty minutes the two men struggled in the water, with the poisonous chemicals bubbling and fizzing around them. Both swallowed a quantity of the poisonous liquid, and although prevented from drowning, the would-be suicide died a few weeks after. The effect of the water upon the plucky constable was terrible to contemplate. The poison, according to the police surgeon, completely destroyed the coating of his stomach. "I was quite unable to digest my food," he says, "and every time I took any, was sick until it was vomited back. I was placed on the police sick list and sent down to the Convalescent Home at Brighton twice. After the second visit I had to go back to my own home very bad indeed. I was so weak that when I attempted to walk I went blind, and had to cling to anything near me to prevent me from falling. I had fearful night-sweats, and would often be seized with a kind of cramp, which seemed to be in my very bones. I could not retain food or nourishment, except in minute quantities—just enough to keep me alive.

"I next went into Brompton Hospital, but again I derived no benefit. For two years I remained in the police force, suffering in this way and during the two years I was only able to put in three months duty! Seeing that I was practically done for, in January, 1899, I was given a special pension, and retired from the force.

"I continued to get worse, despite all efforts. No matter how tempting and light the food which was prepared, I vomited all I took, and the very sight of food made me sick! I became reduced in weight from over 13 stone to just over 10 stone, and I was as weak as a kitten. The vomiting, the pain across the stomach and in the back, the night sweats and the cramping sensations continued unabated until September in last year.

"In that month I was recommended to try some Bile Beans. A few doses made me feel a bit stronger, so I went in for a course, in order to give them a fair trial. By the time I had taken a few boxes I was a different man. The vomiting had stopped, and the dull aching pain at the pit of the stomach had gone. Every day I got stronger and stronger. The cramp and the night sweats stopped; the specks and flashes before my eyes disappeared; I became able to walk without needing support, and at night I enjoyed sound, refreshing sleep.

"To cut a long story short, I am now quite cured. The effects of the poison have been driven out of my system by the Beans, and my stomach and digestive organs seem to have been re-made. I have eaten so well that I have gained twenty-one pounds in weight, and am still adding to it. For the first time for nearly five years, on Christmas Day last, I was able to eat and enjoy a good Christmas dinner.

"A few months ago I was able to re-start work as attendant in a picture gallery. For three weeks before Christmas I was at work there from half-past eight o'clock in the morning to half-past eleven o'clock at night, Saturdays included, and I did not feel fatigued with it.

"In my case Bile Beans seem to have worked a miracle. Publish my statement by all means, and let as many people as possible know what a splendid remedy is placed within their reach."

The chief lesson to be learned from the above sensational incident, is that no case of digestive ailment, weakness, nausea after meals, sleeplessness and general debility is too bad for Bile Beans to touch. Remember this! Hand this case to your friends who are ailing. To put Bile Beans in the way of a sufferer is the kindest service you can render. Just think of the debt of gratitude Heffernan owes to the friend who recommended Bile Beans to him. You may earn like gratitude from some of your friends. The medicine referred to above may be obtained from all chemists, price one and three-half-pence a box or two and nine for a box containing three times the quantity.

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minster Bridge Road, and my man's watching the place. Come on, we must be off. I must take her to-night."

Twenty minutes after that the inspector was talking to the plain-clothes man.

"Still there?" he inquired, laconically.

"Yes, sir," returned Jennings, "I followed her from Streatham Hill here. She went in there three hours ago and I haven't took my eyes off the door and there's no back way."

"Good, then I can nab her. You'd better come with me. Jennings."

He crossed over as he spoke and entered the door of the private hotel. The portly proprietress met him in the hall.

"You want rooms, sir," she inquired civilly.

"No, madam," the officer responded. "You have a lady in this house who came three hours ago. A lady dressed in a blue cloak."

The proprietress looked up sharply.

"Oh, you may tell me, madam," the officer continued, "I am a police-officer."

The woman looked a little nervous.

"Well, sir," she said hesitatingly, "a lady dressed in a blue cloak did come here."

"And she's here still?"

"Yes, sir. She took a bedroom for the night, and not feeling very well, went to bed at once."

"Very good," said the inspector, "then will you have the goodness to awake her. I hold a warrant for her arrest."

The woman looked still more scared than ever, and seemed altogether too frightened to carry out the officer's orders. But he was firm, albeit polite, and she had reluctantly to go upstairs, the inspector and the plain-clothes man following her to the landing.

The hotel proprietress knocked at "No. 7," but no answer came. She knocked again; still no answer. Another knock, sufficiently loud to arouse the whole house. No answer.

"Try the door," suggested the inspector.

The woman turned the handle; the door yielded. The woman looked in.

"Why, goodness gracious!" she gasped, "she's not here!"

The inspector darted to her side in a moment.

"Are you quite sure this is the right room?" he demanded, gazing around the unoccupied chamber, with its unruffled bed.

"Quite sure!" she responded, "I showed her up here myself."

"Humph! And you, Jennings, you've watched the street door all the time?"

"Haven't took my eyes off it, sir!"

"And you're quite sure she didn't go out?"

"Positive, sir; there ain't been a soul come out of this house 'cept a man with a dark beard."

The inspector swung round impetuously. The landlady looked up curiously.

"Have you a man with a black beard staying here?" asked the inspector.

"No, sir," the woman answered at once, "we are nearly empty, and there's nobody at all answering that description."

The inspector was visibly annoyed. "Jennings," he said sharply, "how long was it after this woman came in that this man went out?"

Jennings averted his eyes for reflection. "About half an hour, I should say, sir," he said.

The inspector bit his lip. "Jennings," he said angrily, "you're an absolute fool!"

Jennings flushed up.

"Don't you see that the woman who entered and the man who went out, are one and the same person?"

The detective, full of energetic annoyance, darted hither and thither about the room as he spoke.

"Ah, I thought as much!" he exclaimed, as throwing open the doors of a wardrobe, he disclosed an untidy bundle of feminine apparel. There was a black skirt, a woman's dark hat, and—most important of all, as affording means of identification—a long cloth cloak of faded blue.

The face of plain-clothes constable Jennings dropped. He gazed at the bundle of clothing as one transfixed. The inspector startled him out of his lethargy.

"Come on, Jennings," he said sharply. "The harm's done now. Gather those clothes up and bring them along to the Yard."

A brief colloquy between the inspector and the proprietress ensued, and then the former left the place. His brows were puckered up in a frown, and it was apparent to Dr. Branksome, whom he now rejoined in the street, that something was wrong.

"Why, what's up now, inspector?" the doctor inquired.

"Oh, it's *all* up!" the inspector retorted ill-temperedly. "The bird's flown!"

"Flown?"

"Absolutely. Hang that man of mine!" And he gave the doctor a brief account of what had happened. "So you see," he concluded, with a reference to the wearing apparel which he had discovered, "that the bird has flown leaving its feathers behind."

"But where on earth could she have got the disguise from?" queried Dr. Branksome.

The detective looked up, an amused smile chasing away his recent anger.

"Don't say where did *she* get the disguise from. It wasn't a she at all!"

"Good Heavens! What do you mean?"

"I mean," responded Inspector Trench, "that it's pretty plain to me that somebody else has been masquerading in her blue cloak."

"But who would do such——"

"Ha!" returned the officer, "that remains to be found out. But I've got a very strong suspicion that, somehow or other, the woman got on to the fact that she was being shadowed, and that somebody up at that house on Streatham Hill has helped her to baffle us."

"Whom do you think?"

"You'll excuse me, doctor, but just now I haven't time to think—or, rather, I haven't time to explain my thoughts. I've got to *do* now—to act—you understand?"

"And what do you intend to do?" asked Dr. Branksome.

"I'm going back to the Yard now," returned the officer; "and then I'm going on to Streatham, taking three or four reliable men with me."

"Are you going to arrest anybody?"

"Not to-night. I've no certain ground to go upon. But I'm going to post men around that house all night. Then, to-morrow morning, I'm going to fetch Miss Penhurst, and get her to take me—and you as well, if you like—on a visit to her esteemed relative, Anthony Cordelvin."

"And what will you do?"

"Don't know yet—I'm simply going for what we call at headquarters, a 'boss round.'"

Inspector Trench was a busy man that night. He kept his word to the letter. He selected his plain-clothes men, took them to Streatham Hill, and personally posted them at various points of vantage. Then, having returned to the police headquarters on the Thames Embankment, he wrote a letter, which he addressed and posted to Miss Nina Penhurst at Roehampton.

For the past few days, since her parting with Gerald Mortimer, the heart of poor Nina Penhurst had been torn with anguish. To her, like all the rest of the world, had come the news of her lover's disappearance. That disappearance, which had all the signs of foul play connected with it, had caused her the most poignant suffering. All sorts of vague apprehensions she had on the subject; eagerly each day, and several times each day, she had scanned the various editions of the papers for news of her missing sweetheart.

The case had, indeed, as was perfectly natural, caused considerable sensation; and many were the rumours, and very varied the theories, formed in connection with it. Strangely enough, Nina's own opinion, dictated, not by reason, but solely by her womanly intuition, was one which more closely coincided with the facts of the case than any of those advanced by newspapers. Instinctively the poor suffering girl connected

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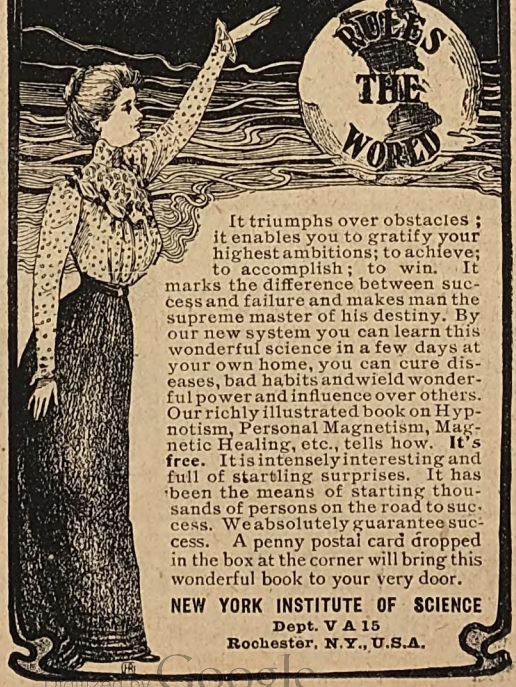

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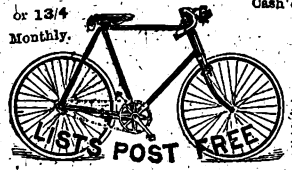

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the kidnapping of Gerald with Stephen Vanstone. Though, had she been pressed to put forth the veriest shadow of a reason for her suspicion, she could not have done so, yet she was imbued with the strongest belief that such was the case. Stephen Vanstone had attacked her; had threatened to throw her into the lake on Wimbledon Common; Gerald Mortimer had rescued her just in time. These were the premises on which the girl argued, and from which she drew a double conclusion that Stephen Vanstone henceforth bore a grudge against Gerald Mortimer, and that he had given vent to his spite by instigating the kidnapping of her lover.

Slender, indeed, and truly feminine, the argument, but the girl was convinced. For two whole days she struggled with herself as to whether she should communicate her suspicions to Police-Inspector Trench, who had previously called upon her; and she had at length made up her mind to do so. Next morning she would go to Scotland Yard. And lo and behold, on the very morning she had intended to undertake this mission, came a letter from the very officer she wanted to see; and he was asking her to see him!

She lost no time. When a woman wants to be punctual, she is always there before time. It happened, therefore, that Nina Penhurst arrived at Scotland Yard fully twenty minutes before the appointed hour.

Inspector Trench was there, however, and told her in a few brief sentences his reason for wishing to see her. She entered into the spirit of her errand at once, and very soon after that, accompanied by Inspector Trench and Dr. Branksome, was on her way to Streatham Hill.

Arrived there the four-wheeler was dismissed. The inspector's first duty was to interview the men who had been posted about the roads all night. From them he elicited the information that no one, man or woman, had issued from the old house since they had been on duty.

"Very well, then," he said, addressing two of the watchers, "come with me to within earshot of the house—I want you to be on hand in case I whistle."

These instructions being complied with, Inspector Trench, accompanied by Dr. Branksome and Nina Penhurst, passed through the side gate, walked boldly up to the front of the house, and rang the bell.

There was no response at first; but a second and more prolonged summons evidently aroused the notice of someone inside.

A footstep was heard in the hall—a light footstep, as of someone stealing up to the door and not wishing to be heard.

Discreetly the detective drew aside, pulling the doctor by the arm with him.

To anyone peering through the letter box from the inside, only the dress of Nina Penhurst was visible. The detective's implied surmise proved correct. Ned Stebbings—for it was his footstep inside—did look through the letter-box; from which he caught sight of a woman's dress. He looked through the keyhole as well, and seeing no sign of anybody else, cautiously drew back the latch and opened the door.

Before Stebbings could see who it was—before he had time to think, Inspector Trench had thrown forward a nimble left foot, and in the most natural manner in the world had placed it so as to make it impossible to shut the door.

At the officer's sudden appearance, Ned Stebbings was plainly taken aback. The inspector was as cool as a cucumber.

"Good morning!" he said, with the utmost coolness. "We wish to see Mr. Roderick Vanstone."

Ned Stebbings went a little bit pale, and he fidgeted somewhat.

"Mr. Roderick Vanstone?" he repeated, hesitatingly. "I'm sorry, sir, but——"

"It's very important," broke in the detective. "This lady here—Miss Penhurst—has called to see her relative, Mr. Cordelvin."

"Ha! Mister Cordelvin!" returned Stebbings, who had now recovered his presence of mind. "I was jest goin' to mention, sir, that Mister Vanstone and Mister Cordelvin hev gone away."

"Gone away!" repeated the detective.

"Yessir. Mister Cordelvin—as you or the lydy may p'raps know, sir—bein' in a weak state of 'ealth, the master hev took 'im away for a few days' change."

"H'm! When did they go?"

"Last night, sir."

"Where have they gone to?"

"Ah—that I couldn't say, sir. Leastways, it may be Bournemouth, or it may be Torquay."

Inspector Trench hesitated a moment. He had anticipated objections, but he had not anticipated a point-blank statement that the master of the house had gone away. As a matter of fact, he did not believe that statement; as a matter of policy, he could not say so. But having gone so far, he was not willing to leave the place without finding out something. He therefore turned to Nina.

"Miss Penhurst," he said, giving her a significant look, "you must be very tired after your long journey—you will probably like to rest awhile." Then without waiting for her answer, he added to Stebbings: "This lady would like to go in and sit down for a few minutes. As a relative of Mr. Cordelvin, there can be no objection to that, I suppose?"

Ned Stebbings scratched his head.

"Well, sir," he said doubtfully, "you all bein' strangers to me, and it being' agen the orders, I ought recly to refuse; but as the young lydy's tired, I'll take the risk. Come in, miss, by all manner o' means!" And he opened the door wide.

Though he did not show it, Inspector Trench was certainly very much surprised. Surely, if this man's account of his master's absence were a lie, he would never dare challenge its refutation by an invitation to them to enter.

With his brain hard at work trying to get to the root of the matter, the detective, with Nina and Dr. Branksome, passed through the hall, and was shown into the library.

Inspector Trench threw a quick glance round the room. In this house of mystery, what would his brief inspection reveal?

(To be continued.)

A Matter of Choice.

It is said that if the elephant had the kicking power of the grasshopper in proportion to his size, one could kick a man from Liverpool to New York with one kick. This may be so; but we don't believe there is one man in a hundred but would prefer to pay and travel by steamer, even though the trip did consume seven days more time.

Couldn't Swallow That.

A shark swallowed a man in armour off the coast of Denmark a few years ago, last year he swallowed a horse off the coast of Ireland, last week he was seen off the coast of Sussex. While the crowd was looking at him from the pier, a copy of that week's *Harum Scarum* blew overboard, in the upper corner of which was printed, "Circulation over two hundred and fifty thousand copies weekly." The shark kindly but firmly refused to swallow that. It drew a line there, and went back again to Denmark.

The Value of Books.

A farmer who doesn't read much says that the value of literature entirely depends. If a book had a calf-skin cover it is valuable as a razor-stop. If it is thick, it comes in first rate to put under the corner of the chest of drawers which has lost a leg. If it has a clasp on that will keep it closed; it cannot be eclipsed as a missile to hurl at a dog. If it has a large cover, like a geography, it is as good as a piece of tin to nail over a broken pane of glass. If it belongs to somebody else, it is a convenient article to hold up a window.

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In Confidence

Conducted by

MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

A Proposed Love Bureau.

Some time ago I published an answer to "Three Old Maids," who, readers will remember, were tired of single blessedness and asked me if they were too old to marry. (They each had a snug little sum of money.) This mail brings me several letters, principally from South Africans, who are eager to meet the ladies. These correspondents invite me to give them their names, and establish communications between the parties.

❦❦❦

I fear I cannot agree to do this. To start introducing my clients to each other would involve me and this paper in too terrible a sea of complications. It might result in our being compelled to turn these offices into a Love Bureau, and the Editor says the premises and the staff are too limited to cope with such a state of affairs. He seems to think there is danger of his sanctum being converted into a rendezvous for loving couples, and, in spite of my assurances to the contrary, will not hear of the scheme. So, readers, I fear I must content myself with just advising you on general lines.

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"Short Stories" as Mutual Friend.

At the same time I may inform "Three Old Maids" that, from correspondence received, I think their best course would be to "trek" at once to the Transvaal, if they can escape the censor. The surplus of loving hearts who chafe at their severance from lovely woman, would, I imagine, fill many a concentration camp, and my lone clients would not, I should think, regret their emigration. So, my lone ones on the veld, though I cannot disclose the ladies' names, one of these days you may run against them in your own locality. The editor has no objection to your using the password "Short Stories" as a means of indentifying them, or, if you prefer it, you might say, on meeting anyone answering to the description: "Are you one of those three old maids?" producing at the same time a current copy of *Short Stories*.

❦❦❦

And here I have another idea to suggest to my readers who are in need of establishing communication with each other, but fear to do so because of lack of introduction. Why not let *Short Stories* be your mutual friend in need? Next time a male client meets a young lady with whom he would like to be acquainted, let him produce *Short Stories*. If in return she produces it also, well, then, why not let that constitute an introduction? It will be a clear proof that the desire to know each other is mutual.

The Girl who Must Rule.

I should not advise you, "M. J. H.," unless you are a very weak-minded young man, to slavishly follow such a girl as you indicate to me. You say you are infatuated with her, but she cares only slightly for you. When you expressed your disapproval of her meeting other young men, she said, "If she married she must rule her husband, who would obey her slightest wish." No man should accept such terms from a woman, and the girl who makes such conditions is probably merely very vain and capricious, and wants strong control.

❦❦❦

I do not say that there are not many happy marriages in which the wife rules. But her rule, in such cases, is beneath the surface. The man looks like the figure-head, and in certain matters is master, but in home matters the woman rules, and the result is ideal for both parties. That a man should be a sort of tame puppy to a woman is against all principle, and "M. F. H.," I think I should make that very clear when you renew your suit—that is, if you are strong-minded enough to do so.

❦❦❦

The Influence of a Fortun-teller.

"Hopeful" is in love with a young lady who only half reciprocates. She is engaged to another man, but "Hopeful" believes she does not care for him. Some months ago she went to a fortune-teller, who told her she was destined to marry a man who answered to the description of my correspondent. "Hopeful" is not a passive believer in destiny, but would like to know how he can actively bring it about.

❦❦❦

I think "Hopeful" has good claim to his *nom-de-plume*. Now that the girl has had him put so conspicuously before her mind, perhaps she will discover that he is quite a possible husband, and that impression should do much to make her more responsive to his attentions. There is nothing like being under a lime-light, when in love, as it is a powerful influence in shaping others' feelings towards you when they are so powerfully reminded of your existence.

❦❦❦

Does Flirting Kill True Love.

"W. L." thinks that after a man and woman have flirted for any time it is doubtful that they could become lovers. I quite agree. In love matters familiarity breeds, if not contempt, indifference, and is a thing to be avoided if the parties think they have reason to be really fond of each other. I have known many cases of people who, instead of seriously cultivating each other, have got on to terms of frivolous intimacy, with the result that they have become permanently severed in the long run. To flirt with anyone argues that you do not consider them worthy of serious regard, and that is not the right state of mind for those about to marry. A joke is an admirable thing, but it is the shortest lived of all fancies, and cannot be prolonged for ever. Neither can an intimacy which has no real basis develop into a life-long attachment.

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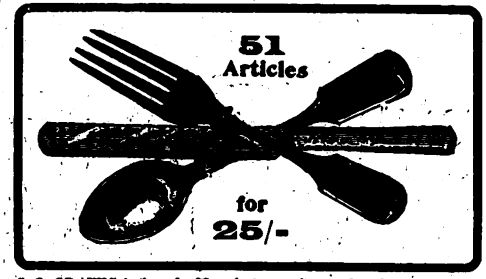

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CHAPTER I.

The Finding of the Cap.

"OH, please, sir, I was coming for you; my mistress, sir!—she's dying, someone's stabbed her, and the police told me to run for Dr. Shand."

The words were gasped out by a pair of red lips, ripe and youthful, but drawn by the terror that dilated the girlish blue eyes which met the divisional surgeon's own. Lucius Shand, on the way back to his surgery after a round of late calls in the raw gloom of an unseasonable May evening, had turned at the sound of pursuing feet.

He was in a poor quarter of Division B, and the girl who had accosted him, though neat and personable enough, was poorly dressed. She seemed, to the surgeon's acute glance, as if she might be the hardly-worked servant of some humble shopkeeper. Her accent and the singular contrast between her raven locks and sapphire-blue eyes, proclaimed her a countrywoman of his. Lucius Shand began to retrace his steps and the little Irish girl trotted beside him in her loose, badly-fitting boots.

"Who is your mistress?" he asked, striding swiftly through the slatternly street in which he had been overtaken.

"Madame Brest, sir," was the answer, "at the wardrobe-shop further on, sir. I went up just now to her parlour and found her lying on the floor. And I screamed 'Police!' sir, and two of them come and some of the neighbours, and I was sent for you, sir."

Lucius Shand nodded. It was a district on whose "beats" the constables of Division B. patrolled in couples—a crowded low-class residential locality lying off a squalid main thoroughfare of the town. Robbery, jealousy, revenge—these were the motives that, as a rule, prompted its frequent crimes—which, he wondered, would prove the key to this?

At the corner of two small bye-ways was a shuttered, double-windowed shop—a morbid group of curious outsiders hung about the door.

The surgeon pushed through, gained the interior of the establishment, on whose threshold a constable stood sentinel, and strode forward, after exchanging a saluto and a rapid sentence with that worthy. A single gas-jet over the entrance to the house beyond, showed that, for the moment, the shop was untenanted, save by Lucius Shand and his escort. It was well stocked, however, with inanimate objects, the racks, shelves and counters around them being piled high with gaudy second-hand costumes, shoes, hats, and other articles of feminine apparel.

Lucius Shand's companion led him past a tiny kitchen, up a flight of dusky stairs, and into an old-fashioned parlour on the first floor. Another constable stood in the middle of the room, near a table laid for a substantial, if solitary meal,—which latter had apparently been interrupted by the event which had brought thither the surgeon and his official colleagues. Close to, upon a leather covered couch, over which there bent two common-place looking women, reclined a third—a woman; tall, brunette, and evidently somewhat advanced in life. Her dress was a black silk gown with yellow ribbons. Those at her bosom were stained with an ominous crimson.

The divisional surgeon went up to the couch, comtemplated its occupant, set his finger-tips to a nerveless wrist, and shook his head. Nevertheless, he made a more deliberate examination before breaking the silence.

"Quite gone," he said, "she cannot have lived ten minutes. The wound must inevitably have proved fatal—it is very deep and suggests the stab of a stiletto. Was she able to speak or move much?"

"Not to move, sir," responded the constable, "not, at least, after I got here. But she did speak, once, and that was to cry out 'Jane! Jane!' and something about 'pity.' They tell me Jane is the name of the servant that we sent for you, sir."

Lucius Shand glanced towards the little Irish girl who had summoned him; she had sunk on her knees at the foot of the couch and was weeping.

"This is, no doubt, what it was done with, sir," added the other, in a whisper, "I only discovered it after we had hurried her off for you—it had been flung down, seemingly, and had rolled under the sofa."

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The form of the observation attracted the surgeon's attention almost more than did the weapon offered to him. It was a thin, polished table "steel," fluted, with a brass hilt and a sharp point; on it was an ominous smear or two. Lucius Shand's gaze travelled from it to the constable's face and back again to the steel.

"Must have been caught up from the table, sir," murmured the police-officer, indicating, with a covert gesture, that piece of furniture. On it was a cooling joint, and, laid in the dish containing this, a pair of horn-handled carvers.

Lucius Shand weighed the instrument thoughtfully. "It would require considerable force to deal such a blow with this," he said, in the same guarded fashion that the constable had employed.

"Quite so, sir," assented the other, "we have notified the inspector at the district station and shall be guided by him. But while you are here, sir, I will seize the opportunity to go over the house more thoroughly than I have been able to do yet. You might keep an eye on the girl, if you don't mind—my mate is dealing with the crowd below, for, of course, the thing spread like wildfire."

The surgeon gave the desired promise and the constable slipped away. By the dead woman's couch her two neighbours chatted glibly in an undertone. The little Irish girl still rocked herself and moaned; her wailing carried Lucius Shand's mind to the days when he was a boy in County Wexford and had heard the "keening" of the mourners from the cottages where wakes were in progress. The "steel" poised in his fingers, he pondered the singularity of the situation and the possible guilt of his pretty compatriot.

When the constable returned, he was not alone. With him entered a spruce, active superior, in the uniform of an inspector. In the hand of the subordinate was a tweed cap, of the peaked variety, soiled and lacking the button on the crown—a few threads marked where it had been.

"Picked up in the yard, sir," he explained, as the surgeon glanced at it after greeting the new-comer. The constable held the cap towards Lucius Shand, a significant thumb planted on one of the cloth sections composing it—near that member was a red smear. The surgeon stooped to examine it.

"Ah!" he said, "well, it may be what you suspect, but I can't express an opinion without testing. The sooner that is done the better."

"Exactly," observed the inspector, with an air of decision, but lowering his voice to a confidential level, "anyhow, I think we shall have to secure the girl. A person who lives in an adjoining house informs the constable below that an hour ago, as he was going up the entry at the rear—it is a short cut to the Grapes Hotel—he noticed this Jane (Jane Donelan is her name) talking with a rough young fellow. Asked if he wore a hat, our informant said, 'No—a cap.'"

The inspector paused to lend weight to this item of news before proceeding.

"She may have let him in," he continued, "while her mistress was at supper or dinner or whatever the meal was supposed to be, and even aided him to do the deed—the deceased is reported to have got out something about 'Jane' and 'pity.'" While the inspector was delivering himself on this explanation he maintained a stealthy watch upon the weeping girl. "Of course, she did call in the police herself, but that may have been done to throw us off the scent. Meantime the fellow was clearing out through the back, with the contents of the cash box Madame Brest kept up here and which was found rifled. Luckily for us, he dropped his cap; that provides a clue and we'll make sure of the petticoat."

He advanced to the crouching figure of the little Irishwoman.

"Jane Donelan," he said, "I shall have to arrest you upon suspicion of being concerned, with some person unknown, in the murder and robbery of your mistress, known as Madame Brest. Anything you say after this warning may be taken down and used in evidence against you."

The girl rose to her feet, horror-stricken, her blue eyes wide and staring. "It—it wasn't me!" she faltered, "oh, please, sir, it wasn't me. She was always good to me; why should I have hurt her? I just came up and found her lying on the floor, and helped her up on to the sofa and ran for the police. That's all I know, Heaven's my witness, sir!"

Her voice broke, she hid her face and began to sob. Coughing a trifle huskily, the inspector drew a pair of linked irons from his pocket and snapped them on her wrists, bidding his subordinate fetch a cab. The women beside the dead wardrobe-dealer shrank from her, startled by this sudden development of the tragedy.

As the constable crossed to the door of the room there was the sound of a hasty tread upon the stair without and a young fellow, hatless and panting, appeared. He was dressed in the rough garments of a working man, a docker or riveter or teamster, and yet had a kind of natural ease and grace about him.

"What's gone wrong?" he exclaimed, "is Madame ill, or it is Janie that's hurt? I couldn't get sense out of the bobby at the front, so I told him I was a friend of the family and he let me past. But I lost my cap in the crush—the street's full!"

He stopped aghast—he had perceived the fettered figure of the little Irish girl. In a bound he had sprung towards her.

"Janie, dear!" he cried; "why is this? Take them off her, somebody; she's innocent, I don't care what she's accused of."

The inspector stepped between them. "Who are you?" he demanded, imperturbably surveying the latest arrival.

"Tom Garside," was the answer, "if it's anything to you—striker at Rollo's boiler-works. What have you put those irons on her for?"

He noticed the couch at his elbow with its sorrowful burden—the body of the dead woman—and recoiled.

"Not that!" he gasped, "you're mad—she's been with me at the back-door best part of the last hour; we're going to be married."

Lucius Shand looked curiously at the inspector, as if uncertain how the latter would act at so peculiar a juncture. That person laid a hand on the shoulder of the young workman.

"Thomas Garside," he said, "you are my prisoner."

CHAPTER II.

The Meaning of the Cap.

"WILL you want me for anything more this evening, sir?"

It was Adam Carter, the divisional surgeon's seedy-looking assistant and dispenser, who put the question. He had followed Lucius Shand into the inner room of the empty surgery.

Lucius Shand looked at the clock over the mantel; the fingers pointed to the second quarter after nine. He reflected abstractedly, then answered in the negative.

"No-thanks," he said, "I have an important test or two to make, and I may as well do it here. But you have had some heavy days recently; take a dose of music-hall or light comedy."

Mr. Carter laughed and went out to extinguish the gas-jets in the ante-chamber and dispensary and don his overcoat. His chief flung off the inevitable ulster, and picked up from his desk an article which he had laid there temporarily on his entry.

This proved to be a rough tweed cap, worn and soiled. It was the one which had been found, earlier that evening, in the yard behind the wardrobe shop of Madame Brest. When his assistant came into the apartment again, Lucius Shand was cutting out a portion of the stained section with a pair of duck-billed scissors. The former contemplated it inquisitively.

"More trouble, sir?" he observed, a kind of admiration in his tone.

The surgeon smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"The eternally recurring problem," he said, "is it or is it not the brand of Cain? Well, I don't imagine I shall get any nearer certainty than the rest of the noble army of experts. If only some genius would discover or invent or both, a reliable test for human blood! But no. Man, the noblest of animals,

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The divisional surgeon went up to the couch, contemplated its occupant, set his finger-tips to a nerveless wrist, and shook his head.

shares his blood corpuscles with the dog and the pig, the rabbit and the horse."

He had placed a portion of the cut-out patch in an inverted watch-glass and mixed in a graduated vessel a ten per cent. blend of glycerine and water. A few drops of the compound spilt skilfully upon the fabric in the watch-glass were left to "soak" it. The assistant lingered, interested, despite his familiarity with it, in the perennial problem of the criminologist.

Lucius Shand next produced a polished wooden box and set up a powerful monocular microscope. Then he got out a diminutive pair of forceps, transferred the fragment of cloth to an oblong strip of glass and, with a rod of the same material, squeezed from it a trace of the reddish fluid. From this he removed the scrap of woollen, placed over the red smear on the microscope slide a thin "cover glass," and slipped both under the microscope and leant to the eye-piece.

For a long time he stood gazing into it. Finally, with a sort of reluctance, he straightened himself, and, fixing an incredulous gaze on Mr. Carter, whistled. Having delivered himself of this practical comment, he returned to the instrument and remained for some moments apparently glued to it. When, ultimately, he withdrew his eye from the lens, it was to lift the microscope on one side, snatch up his ulster, thrust on his hat, and slap the bewildered assistant on the back.

"I was wrong!" he exclaimed. "I shall want you, Carter, the dose of music-hall must wait. Instead, I will treat you to a more novel form of excitement. You shall come man-hunting with me, and man-hunting is tiger-hunting, wolf-hunting, and fox-hunting all in one."

Familiar with his chief's vagaries, both of mood and manner, Carter reached for his own hat, donned it, and allowed himself to be hurried off, out of the surgery and into the night air. As they gained it, Lucius Shand, latching the spring-lock of the exterior door with a sharp pull, the hour chimed from some steeple—ten o'clock. But the assistant scarcely noticed the time, he was so profoundly occupied in wondering why the divisional surgeon had not offered him a glimpse of the microscopic preparation, the study of which had thus singularly affected Lucius Shand.

On the kerb without, his chief halted. "There is a circus in town somewhere," he said, "the question is, where? Let us consult the hoardings."

He strode down the street to a huge erection of planks, plastered over with posters, and scanned them. A tawdry red, white, and blue "six sheet" bill intimated the presence of "Dellegana's Colossal Combination Cirque and Hippodrome."

"Salter's Fields," read the surgeon. "Ten minutes walk," he commented, "we must take a cab—or, rather, the cab must take us."

He hailed a vehicle, motioned the assistant into it, gave their destination, and got in himself. The horse went off at a swift trot—the driver had recognised his passengers.

Lucius Shand lit a cigar, duly inviting his ally to share his case. The brand, if good, was a tremendously strong one—a peculiar taste on the part of the divisional surgeon—and set Mr. Carter coughing convulsively. Before he had grown accustomed to the pungent tobacco, the cab stopped at an earthern pavement in the gutter of a macadam road. Beyond was a spreading darkness—the gloomy void of a brickfield—and, standing out on it, the lighter booths and tall grey tents of a touring circus.

Lucius Shand descended, paid their Jehu, and, with his companion, groped a way across the field towards the principal tent—a lofty marquee. Near this, connected with the marquee by a canvas corridor, was a smaller tent. Towards it, after a cursory review of the prospect, the surgeon bent his steps.

An attendant intervened as he was about to enter. Lucius Shand exhibited a shilling and a card. "I want to see the manager," he said, significantly. The other accepted the coin and the pasteboard, and slid into the tent—to reappear almost immediately.

"Will you step this way, sir?" he requested. The surgeon

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beckoned to his assistant and together the two entered the frail structure, to find themselves in the presence of a little group of performers ready to discharge their various tasks. The lady equilibrist, her gold lace and spangles supplemented by a long and dingy, though once gorgeous cloak, the fair equestrienne, the trapeze artist, the wild beast tamer, were easily to be distinguished among less important "stars." From this tent also, there opened a second corridor of canvas, and through it penetrated occasionally the whinny of a horse, or the hoot of an elephant.

Lucius Shand and his ally had been piloted to the side of a Buffalo-Bill-like personage in a check suit and loose brown sombrero. An air of command sat on his aquiline features, and his grey moustache and imperial, lent him a semi-military bearing.

"Mr. Dellegana?" hazarded the surgeon, with a tactful inclination of respect. His bow was returned with abrupt elegance.

"The same, sir," said the other, "at your service. I'm a busy man, but anything I can do for a gentleman of your eminent profession will be a pleasure, sir, a pleasure."

"I am greatly obliged," answered Lucius Shand, "mine is an odd errand, Mr. Dellegana, and yet I must beg you not to mistake its apparent flippancy. I am a police official, and my business is far from trivial. You have in your show, doubtless, some animal of the camel tribe—the camel itself, or a dromedary, alpaca, or llama. Has any such animal been killed or injured within the last twenty-four hours?"

The manager of the Colossal Combination twirled his handsome imperial.

"A dromedary," he rejoined, "was gored this afternoon by an old bull elephant that grew cranky and had to be shot. Dromedary was dead before we could guess what had hurt him. I guess that meets your case."

"Thank you, yes," said Lucius Shand, "and now one more question. Have you on your staff, by any chance, a Frenchman?"

"A Frenchman! you can take your choice of three" he was told. "There's Monsieur Delacour, the juggler, Monsieur Silvestre, otherwise 'Pompon and his Poodle," and the Count de la Mort, the great fencer and duellist, who has slain five men in single combat."

"Are any of them——?" And Lucius Shand whispered into the manager's ear. Mr. Dellagana shook his head, then smote his hands together.

"Jerusalem!" he said, "I had forgotten; yes, Pompon. He comes off in a minute. Queer chap, Pompon, not much in his poodle act—he's really a stable hand, but clever with dogs, and I let him go on with a poodle I've got. That dog's a miracle to dance, and Pompon just imitates him and falls about to get laughs. He's chummy with the dog—being French—but a Frenchman can't clown for nuts. He's worse than usual to-night, the dromedary fell on him this afternoon and bruised him a bit. Here he is."

The surgeon sent a rapid murmur in his assistant's direction.

"You can do a regulation twist, Carter," he remarked; "keep your eyes skinned—I may need you."

He moved forward across the tent with the manager of the circus. A ludicrous figure had just entered it—a man in the quaint garments of a Pierrot, with whitened face and cone-shaped hat. Under his arm he carried a shaved and be-ribboned poodle.

"Silvestre," announced Mr. Dellegana, "two gentlemen wish to see you—put the dog down for a minute."

The clown dropped the poodle, which began to sniff at the visitors' heels, and looked about nervously. "I do not know zem," he said; "what do zey want wiz me?"

Lucius Shand made a gesture to his assistant. "I arrest

"Why is this? Take them off her, somebody; she is innocent, I don't care what she's accused of."

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you, Jean Silvestre," he declared, "on the charge of robbing and murdering, some few hours ago, one Madame Brest, of—ah, would you?"

He had grasped the clown by a loose sleeve as the latter turned to fly. Mr. Carter took the wrist of the other arm and brought it sharply behind its owner with an upward and inward tension. The one and only Pompon cringed and bent—he was a prisoner. The surgeon had exercised the right possessed by every private individual under the English law of arresting, without warrant or other legal process, any person reasonably suspected of having committed a felony."

Amazed, the bystanders obeyed his quiet commands, a four-wheeler was summoned, and the surgeon and his assistant marched their captive to it, after permitting him to don a hastily-brought cap and overcoat. The circus performers stared at the vehicle as it drove away—puzzled by the suddenness of the concluded incident, and the absence of uniforms on the part of Lucius Shand and his ally.

When they drew up at the district station, the surgeon, leaving the Frenchman in the care of Mr. Carter and the cab-driver, went to seek out the inspector in authority. He was in his office, studying the daily report book.

Lucius Shand bade him a curt "good-evening."

"Where are your prisoners in the Golconda Street murder?" demanded the divisional surgeon; "the servant and her poor beggar of a lover?"

"In the cells here," said the inspector; "too late to do anything else with them."

"Then," intimated Lucius Shand pitilessly, "you can let them go—I've got your man."

The police official leapt out of his chair.

"What!" he gasped incredulously; "they didn't do it?"

"No," he was told; "for I have the fellow who did—an odd man and occasional clown in a travelling circus. Nationality French, name Jean—J-e-a-n, my friend, not J-a-n-e. What Madame Brest said was probably 'Jean, *ayez pitié!*'—'have mercy!' that is. Also the stain on the cap was not human blood, neither was it that of a bird, a fish, or a reptile. It was that of the camel tribe. A camel was gored by an elephant this afternoon at Dellegana's circus on Salter's Fields. You'd better get my prize in—his other name is alleged to be Silvestre—Jean Silvestre—but the latter may be an alias."

The surgeon's "alleged" was justified of the event. The Frenchman proved to be nothing less than the wastrel husband of the dead wardrobe-dealer, who, having visited her—during his presence in the town with Dellegana's Circus—to demand money, had been admitted by her while Jane Donelan had been so pleasantly occupied at the rear entrance of the shop.

Being refused a subsidy, he had stabbed and robbed his wife and regained the circus in time for the evening performance. But for the camel's blood upon the cap he had unfortunately dropped in his flight by the window of a back room, he might have escaped in earnest.

Jane and her lover were released with honour, and signalised their delight at this unexpected development by getting married forthwith.

On his return to the surgery that eventful evening Mr. Carter had an opportunity of examining under the microscope the oval non-nucleated corpuscles—the only identifiable blood-corpuscle of any species of animal—which Lucius Shand had obtained from the stain on the fatal cap.

"Yes," said the assistant reverently, "I think I should have twigged that much. But what beats me is this—how the dickens did he fill it all out?"

[Next Week: "THE PERFUME IN THE CUT-GLASS BOTTLE."]

The Sale of a Widow.

The Failure of Mr. Perkins' Attempted Murder Case.

PUDDLETON is an out-of-the-way corner of England which is never likely to be marked on the map because it is so small that until two years ago the late lamented Perkins, constable, was the most important frequenter of the village, and had been for the last six years and more.

There is nothing in this to reflect any discredit on the late Mr. Perkins. If no one better than himself were ever seen in the village street it was certainly no fault of his.

He was a very remarkable man, rather small and shrivelled up perhaps, and the grave responsibilities of his position had silvered his hair at a very early age. His face, as seen under his helmet of dark blue, was the colour of a well-worn kettle that has seen a good deal of the fire, and his yellow, crackling skin was as dry as a wisp of last year's hay.

As he walked he invariably dangled his handcuffs from his side, making them pleasantly click, and in that simple suggestion of official power began and ended the majesty of the law in Puddleton.

But while Mr. Perkins was regarded with much respect by the people of Puddleton, it must not be supposed that Puddleton was anything to him. It was merely a little corner in the district he visited, and for many years it gave him so little trouble that he began to treat it with contempt, and the periodical visits he reported at headquarters in the county town of Leekly, were often paid in his imagination only.

And yet the most interesting case with which Mr. Perkins was ever connected in the course of his long and varied experience was undoubtedly the trial of William Scrace and Timothy Healing for the attempted murder of Sarah Johnson, widow, and in the annals of the Puddleton police reports no event of greater moment will be found recorded, either in the past, or I imagine, in the days to come.

It was Mr. Perkins' boast that whenever he was wanted he was invariably on the spot, and on this occasion at all events the assertion proved correct.

For three days the little constable had missed Puddleton on his rounds, and on the fourth, moved by some foreboding of coming evil, he had looked in at the Half Moon unusually early for his glass of bitter ale.

He was sitting by the open window and smoking, when suddenly Sarah Johnson appeared in the doorway and called him by name.

She was drenched through and through, and the water dripped from her skirts and formed little puddles on the floor. Even her hair was reeking, and she was still rubbing the water from her eyes. Having run a mile and more she was out of

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breath, and it was some time before the constable could make out through her angry gesticulations that an attempt had been made on her life, and that two of the villagers had attempted to drown her in a hogshead of water.

It was a moment for prompt action, and little Perkins did not lose his head. Without even waiting to finish his glass of beer he ran out into the street, and, following at the heels of the widow, he ran until he was out of breath over the rough path across the moor which led to her cottage.

"Look here, widow," he called out presently, "there's no need to run so fast as this. If they're going they'll be gone by this time."

"No, they won't mister," the widow called back, without turning her head and still running as fast as her legs could carry her. "They're both biling drunk by this time. Come along."

The exertion was almost too much for the little constable, but he was glad he had taken the trouble to run when he reached the garden gate and heard the voices of the men.

As the widow had said, they were both the worse for drink, and at the moment Mr. Perkins had arrived they were struggling desperately together on the floor, and Timothy Healing the elder was calling out at the top of his voice: "A pint's a pound! A pint's a pound!"

They made no attempt at resistance, for they were wont to cower at the very name of Perkins, and ten minutes later the little man had them handcuffed and was marching them off, one on each side, to the nearest farm, where he borrowed a cart and drove them over to the downs of Leekly.

The next morning when the magistrate had duly arrived and put up his horse in the White Hart stables he went out into the street and found Mr. Perkins waiting for him there in the midst of a small group of other policemen.

"Any business, Mr. Perkins?" he inquired in a careless way, for he knew that having a glass too much was the worst crime in the district which had been intrusted to that undersized limb of the law.

Mr. Perkins literally swelled with unwonted pride as he put his mouth close to the magistrate's ear.

"I've got a case of attempted murder for you, sir," he whispered.

"Hi! what's that, Mr. Perkins?" interrupted the magistrate, startled out of his usual gravity. "Attempted murder. You don't mean to say so. Come along," and, seizing the little constable by the arm, he hurried off in the direction of the Court.

Perkins solemnly unbolted the door, and the magistrate went straight to the rickety platform at the farther end of the room. He dusted the chair with his handkerchief, and then sat down after carefully parting his coat-tails.

A crowd of loafers followed him into the Court, for such a charge had seldom before been heard in Leekly, and the facts of the case promised to be of startling interest.

In the meantime Perkins had disappeared down below to bring up his prisoners, and a moment later he appeared with one handcuffed on to each arm, and the cheer which greeted his reappearance was immediately suppressed by the magistrate, who rapped his knuckles on the desk, and called out in a harsh, loud voice—

"Silence in the Court!"

The prisoners took their seats on the bench which had been thoughtfully supplied, and surveyed the crowded court with a look of sullen and dogged indifference—nay, even contempt. Their expression annoyed Mr. Perkins.

"If you don't bear yourselves with a meekness becoming to your degraded position," he whispered savagely, "I'll take you both back again to your cells."

This warning, accompanied as it was with a most threatening look, had its desired effect, and Mr. Perkins, with an inward chuckle, went off in search of Sarah Johnson, on whose life the wicked attempt had been made.

She was a tall, gaunt woman, who looked very much as if she could take care of herself under ordinary circumstances. Her hair was crisp and black, and almost matched the colour of her eyes, save when she turned them on the prisoners, for then they filled with a flood of passion, and shone with a deep red light.

Mr. Perkins courteously produced a chair for her accommodation and then, after clearing his throat three or four times, and looking round the room over the rims of his eye-glasses, which balanced in a marvellous way on the tip of his nose, he rose and addressed the Court.

"Your Wuship," he said, "this here is the most extraornary case that it has ever been my misfortune to bring before the Court. Yesterday those two men there, who for dirty and defiant raggedness there ain't much to choose between, did combine together and unlawfully attempt to take the life of this here poor widow. The attempt on the life of the lady was one of the most diabolical and peculiar ever recorded in the annals of crime.

"I must tell your Wuship that Timothy Healing there, who seems to have been the instigator of the villainy, is, or was, engaged to be married to the plaintiff. This makes the commission of the crime ten times worse. Yesterday the aforesaid Timothy Healing, in company with this here William Scrace, entered the house of this here Saree Johnson, and induced her by some means unknown to enter a tub of water——"

A roar of laughter interrupted Mr. Perkins, which was again suppressed by the magistrate.

"Induced her to enter a tub of water," repeated the constable, with impressive dignity. "She being therein, this here Timothy Healing, accompanied by the aforesaid William Scrace, did feloniously, violently, and by force of arms seize her by the hair of her head, duck the same under water, and hold it there with intent to injure, meaning thereby to deprive her of life and the means of breathing air."

"Would you mind repeating that, Mr. Perkins?" said the magistrate, who was now thoroughly aroused.

The constable was vexed at the request, but nevertheless he complied, albeit with very bad grace. He then asked if he might call the plaintiff.

"Stand up on that there chair, Saree!" he called out.

All eyes were turned upon the woman, who, shaking her scraggy fists in the direction of the prisoners, mounted the chair, and, with her arms folded before her, waited to state her case and to obtain justice. As a study in faded brown, her antique gown and weather-beaten face could hardly have been rivalled.

"Mrs. Johnson," inquired the magistrate, suppressing a smile at her weird appearance, "do you recognise these two men?"

"Don't I?" remarked the plaintiff curtly.

"You mustn't speak like that to his Wuship," said Mr. Perkins, in a horror-stricken voice.

"I shall!" said the widow, with rasping emphasis.

"No you won't!" said Mr. Perkins, turning red in the face, and seizing her arm.

"Yes I will!" shouted the infuriated female, shaking, "If you don't let go——"

A scrimmage seemed imminent, when the magistrate sternly interfered, and order was restored.

"Is it true that Mr. Timothy Healing was your affianced husband?" he asked, after an impressive silence, which was meant as a rebuke to Mr. Perkins.

"It is. And a dirty, good-for-nothing scamp he is."

"And William Scrace?"

"He's another. A pair of vile——"

"These comments are uncalled for," said the magistrate severely.

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"Then what did you ask me for?" said the widow.

Mr. Perkins was delighted at this.

"Result of not checking her in time," he said to himself so loud that it was heard all over the Court and by the magistrate, who thought it best to ignore the remark altogether.

Sarah was then called upon to state her case.

"I was a-cleaning my boots for Sunday," she began without a moment's hesitation, "when in comes these two men. Healing, he seemed as if he'd had enough to drink, so I wouldn't kiss him, and William Scrace there was much about the same.

"'Saree,' says he, persuasive like, 'd'ye want to earn five shillings, old gal?'

"Now, I know 'd his pockets were full for he had just sold his litter of little pigs. 'Yes,' says I.

"'Then fill that there tub with water,' says he.

"'All by myself?' says I.

"'Yes,' says he.

"Well, I started running backwards and forwards from the well, and Tim he stood by with Will Scrace there, both of them drinking out of one bottle so contumacious like that you couldn't tell which was which.

"Maybe I went to the well fifty times, maybe a hundred before that tub was full. Timothy kept going up to it and looking in suspicious like. 'Fill it right full, old gal,' says he.

"'What for?' says I.

"'Never you mind,' says he.

"Presently I had that barrel full and running over. 'There you are,' says I.

"First Timothy he looks in, and then Will Scrace came and had a look.

"Tim seemed satisfied. 'Do you want to earn another five shillings, old gal?' says he.

"'Of course,' says I.

"Then before I knew what was what, they seized me round the waist and soused me right in that tub, your Wuship. I hollered as loud as I could. 'Her head goes too,' said Timothy. 'Of course it does,' said Will, and then they ducked me right underneath, and I swallowed as much water as a bucket holds, and was all a bubbling like a kettle on the boil.

"Then they was scared and let me up, and I hollered again, and just broke away and ran all the way to the village, and got Mr. Perkins, and he came and found them fighting, and arrested them. So now you know."

Looks of incredulity and utter amazement were exchanged all over the Court. The magistrate was entirely puzzled.

"It's a most extraordinary case," he said. Then he called Timothy Healing.

"Is it true that you were engaged to Sarah Johnson?" he asked.

"Worse luck," said Timothy shortly.

"And is this charge made against you also true?"

"You wouldn't ask if you'd seen the old gal when she got out of that there tub," said Timothy with a chuckle. "But I never meant to drown her, your Wuship. I didn't, straight."

"If you can prove that, do so," said the magistrate gravely.

"I was tight that night, your Wuship."

At this William Scrace suddenly seemed to take an interest in the proceedings for the first time.

"I was tight, too," he said with a smile of satisfaction.

"In fact we shouldn't be far wrong if we said you were both tight," interrupted Mr. Perkins.

"That's it," said the prisoners in chorus.

"By the expression 'tight' do I understand you to mean intoxicated?" asked the magistrate with a frown.

"Quite right, your Wuship," remarked Will Scrace emphatically. Then he brought his hand down on the rail before him with a bang. "Look here, your Wuship, here's how it was. Tim, he came round to my place that day and I could see he had been drinking worse than usual. 'Sold those little pigs of his,' thought I. 'P'raps he's going to stand me a drink,' and I asked him in friendly like.

"Then he set down and began to cry. I'm like that, gentlemen, often as I have seen that man drunk, whenever he sets down to cry I just can't stand it.

"'What, haven't you sold your little pigs then, mate?' says I.

"'Yes,' says he.

"'Then why are you crying?' says I.

"''Cause I'm such a lazy good-for-nothing drunkard,' says he. 'I'm engaged to Widow Johnson, and I'm not good enough for her. I just ain't fit to marry no respectable woman,' says he; 'and, besides, I've just sold my litter of little pigs,' says he; 'and I want to go up to London, and there's another girl up there,' says he, 'I might take up with if it wasn't for the widow. And I don't want to break Saree's heart, being a shiftless, worthless fellow as I am.'

"'Then why don't you break it off with Saree,' said I to him. 'If she wants to chuck you on account of your worthlessness there ain't no difficulty about that, is there?'

"'But she don't want to chuck me,' says he.

"'Then it's you wants to chuck her?' says I.

"'Well,' says he, 'that wasn't what I set out to say, but we'll let it stand as you put it in that way.'

"Then there was a silence, and he broke out a-sobbing again.

"'Look here,' I said, 'if you feel like that I'll take Saree from you.'

"Then he sits up straight and stops crying all of a sudden.

"'No, you won't,' he says.

"'And why not?' says I.

"'Not unless you pay for her,' says he. 'This ain't no playing, this is business. Give me eightpence a pound and you shall have her.'

"'Done,' says I, not thinking like.

"Then we remembered in Puddleton there weren't no scales to weigh her with, nor within ten miles either. So we set a-thinking for a time and Bill there he made a suggestion real clever. He is clever sometimes when he is drunk, is Bill.

"'Look here,' he hollered out, 'a pint's a pound, ain't it?'

"'Yes,' said I, 'a pint's a pound.'"

"'Then, we'll fill a tub with water, and put old Saree in,' says Tim. 'For every pint that overflows you'll have to pay me eightpence.'

"'Go on,' says I. 'How 're you going to measure spilt water? There ain't no way of doing it.'

"'Where was you dug up?' says he. 'When we takes the lady out we'll fill the hogshead up again, and every pint that you put in you pays me for.'

"Well, we went round to the house, and you know the rest of the story, your Wuship."

* * * * *

"Mr. Perkins," said the magistrate, severely, "this is no case to bring before the Court." And thereupon he got up and the Court adjourned for refreshments.

Arthur Merrian.

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JACK WYNN'S CONFESSION.

A Story of Some Stolen Diamonds.

Miss Russell, from her position on the pavement, gazed up at the shuttered windows with a look of perplexed disappointment in her great, dark eyes. The shadows had begun to creep down the quiet street, with its double row of high, red brick houses; the trams that went gliding by the distant corner were crowded; a newsboy passed with a bundle of sporting extras under his arm; a man entered the house opposite with a latchkey, and the echo of the closing door reverberating through the length and breadth of the street added to the girl's sense of utter loneliness. She placed one tiny, russet-shod foot on the lower step as though she meant to ascend, glanced up once more at the frowning portal, and, turning sharply, walked away in the direction of Hyde Park.

Miss Russell was annoyed. When, half an hour previously, she had reached Victoria just in time to see the last train for Milton (where the Russells' country house was situated) move out, she had consoled herself with the thought that her Aunt Caroline had returned from the North a fortnight ago, and that with her she would be most welcome to stop till morning. It was, however, her Aunt Caroline's window that was boarded, and as she walked away she was turning over in her mind the few expedients that presented themselves. Though it was late in the season, everybody was still out of town.

The idea of taking a room herself at a hotel did not appeal to her favourably. She had never been at a hotel alone, and the thought of it was much more forbidding than of passing the night in the empty family residence, which, after all, was only a few streets away, and the keys of which were in the little silver-mounted satchel that hung at her belt. She could get along very well without dinner, she told herself, for she had lunched late, and, moreover, the excitement had taken away her appetite, and she had a headache.

She stopped at a telegraph office to send a message home, fearing that the family would be uneasy over her non-appearance, and when she came out night had fallen. She hurried on now, full of nervous dread. There were few people about, but in each one she saw a possible enemy. Presently she heard footsteps behind her, and she quickened her pace. The footsteps came nearer, and with fast-beating heart she slackened her pace that the person might pass her. The next moment she was rudely jostled to one side. When she recovered herself a young man, with hat in hand, was making the most profuse apologies.

"I beg ten thousand pardons," he was saying. "It was really very stupid of me—very. I was deep in thought, and did not see you. I trust I did not frighten you very much. I am sure I am exceedingly sorry."

Miss Russell looked up at him for the first time. Then a sudden revulsion of feeling swept over her.

"Jack!" she cried; "I am delighted."

"Nan!" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you doing in town at this hour alone?"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me, Jack," she pursued. "I thought it was some horrible drunken man. I don't think I was ever so thoroughly alarmed in my life. And to think it was only Jack Wynn!"

"But you haven't answered my question, I thought you were going to be away until Whitsun, at all events."

"We are," she answered, now thoroughly composed once more. "I just ran up for the day to get my diamonds from the Safe Deposit Company for Mollie's dinner to-morrow. Then I had some shopping to do, and I missed my train."

"And the diamonds?" asked Wynn, somewhat irrelevantly.

"Oh, they're here," Nan answered, tapping the little bag at her waist.

"No wonder you were frightened when I jostled you. What a risk you ran—alone in the streets after dark, with several thousand pounds' worth of precious stones in a position to be snatched from you by any footpad."

"I never thought of that," she said nonchalantly; "but I suppose there was danger. However, now that I have a protector all fear has fled."

"Where are you going, may I ask?" the young man queried.

"Home."

"But I thought the last train had gone?"

"It has; I mean to our house in the Park."

"Who is there?"

"No one. I shall be quite alone."

"Then you must not go," Jack determined. "I will not hear of such a thing; it is madness. You shall come with me. Mother will be delighted to see you, and it will be much better."

Miss Russell, however, was determined. She thanked him for his kindness, but declared that she could not think of imposing herself upon his mother. She was not at all timid, she said. There were heavy locks and burglar-proof bolts on the doors, and she would feel entirely safe.

"Have you dined?" her companion asked at length, seeing that all his arguments were vain; and when she admitted that she had not, he marched her to a not distant restaurant and ordered dinner for two.

"And now," he said, authoritatively, when they had finished their coffee, "since you insist on sleeping in that empty house, I am going there with you to look over it and see that every door and window is secure. Indeed, I have half a notion to sit all night on the front steps to guard the premises."

She laughed at his fears.

"If you go on like that, Jack," she asserted, smilingly, "you will succeed in making me as timid as you are."

* * * * *

The confidence that Miss Russell placed in Mr. Wynn was born of long acquaintance. They had been children together in Ireland, where their fathers' estates adjoined, and later, in London, they had been thrown much with each other in Society. The elder Wynn had lost most of his fortune before his death, and it was currently reported that his widow and Jack were in anything but affluent circumstances. The young man had a position in a stockbroker's office, and he and his mother lived in a flat near Sloane Square. Fear of causing Mrs. Wynn embarrassment was Nan's chief reason for refusing the son's proffered hospitality. She had known her in her husband's most prosperous days, and she did not care to magnify the contrast of her present position by reminding her of the past.

Jack was very good indeed, Nan thought, when at last he had departed, and she was alone in the great house. He had gone carefully over it from garret to basement, he had examined the window fastenings, and had tested the locks and bolts on the doors. He had, moreover, looked into cupboards and under beds to assure himself that there were

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no marauders lurking there ready to spring forth and do damage so soon as his back was turned. All this, she told herself, he had done out of sheer kindness of heart, and yet the effect had not been precisely what he must have desired.

Instead of putting the sole occupant of the dwelling at her ease, his own solicitude had made her nervous, and as, having bidden him good-bye at the door and turned the key in the lock, she ran lightly up the broad, softly-carpeted staircase to her room, her own shadow, projected ahead of her by the hall light which she had purposely left burning, caused her to start in affright, and set her heart beating wildly.

Once inside her own bed-chamber, she closed the door and would have locked it, but to her surprise there was no key there. The door leading into her boudoir, she found, was likewise without a key, and as it opened outward the device of rolling a piece of furniture against it was not of service. The entrance from the passage-way to her boudoir was guarded only by a curtain, she remembered, as, at her own request the door had been taken from its hinges and carried off to the lumber room. This, of course, was not calculated to add to Miss Russell's peace of mind, but she put as bold a face on the situation as was possible, and began leisurely to undress.

She had loosened the coils of her dark hair, and, standing before her mirror, was combing out the long, shining tresses, when there came to her ears what sounded to her like a stealthy tread on the stairs leading up from the hall below. For a moment she stood transfixed, her raised hand still grasping the comb, and the reflection that the mirror gave was that of a beautiful statue rather than of breathing flesh and blood.

She listened intently, her nerves and senses tense, for the slightest sound. The silence of the tomb prevailed. She told herself that it was her imagination, and, growing bolder, walked to the door, opened it and peered out into the hall. The place was still as death. She leant over the banisters and looked down. Everything below was precisely as she had left it, not fifteen minutes before.

Returning to her room, she finished combing her hair, and, completing her disrobing, she turned the light down to a mere glimmer, and crept in between the sheets. For an hour or more she lay awake listening. Once she was startled by what sounded, in the stillness, like the report of a pistol, but which, she reasoned with herself, was merely the cracking of a piece of ill-made furniture in its process of warping. Once the echo of a rumbling cart sounded like distant thunder; and then, at intervals, she heard a little scratching sound that she fancied must be made by mice between the walls and the plaster. At last she fell into a doze, from which, some time later, she awakened with a start, and the realisation that someone was in the room with her.

The light that she had lowered to a mere spark had been turned up to a half blaze, and by its aid she distinctly saw, standing before her dressing-table, its back towards her, a figure that at once impressed her as marvellously familiar. In an instant her every sense was alert. She sat bolt upright, and in a voice in which intense fright and bewilderment were mingled in equal proportions, she cried—

"Jack!"

Instantly the room was in darkness.

* * * * *

When Miss Russell opened her eyes the bright sunlight of a September morning was streaming in between the parted curtains. With her waking came the remembrance of what seemed to her to have been a horrible nightmare. The incidents of the night of terror came back to her in a confused jumble, and as she separated them one from the other, and gave each a place, the recollection of the suddenly extinguished light was the last of the series. Instinctively her eyes sought the gas jet. A tiny blue flame was flickering in the breeze from the half-opened window; and the girl was thus assured that what seemed to her a terrible reality was, after all, only a most unpleasant dream.

Her silver-mounted chatelaine bag was lying where she had left it on the dressing-table. There was no doubt then that the diamond necklace, the wo diamond stars, and the diamond and ruby butterfly, for which she had come up to town, were quite safe. It was idle, she thought, to look at them, but then the dream was so vivid, that she ran across the room and snatched up the satchel nervously. The mera possibility of those jewels having disappeared sent a cold chill through her very marrow. With trembling fingers she pressed the spring, and the clasp flew back.

In the satchel was a lace-bordered handkerchief. Otherwise it was absolutely empty!

* * * * *

The most energetic efforts of the London detective department failed to find any trace of the missing jewels. Mr. John Wynn, with whom Miss Russell laughed merrily over her curious dream, entered heart and soul into the chase on his own account, declaring jovially that he felt in duty bound to relieve himself of the suspicion under which he knew that she laboured. Moreover, he was anxious to ascertain, if possible, how any thief could have entered or have been secreted in that house, in view of his own most thorough precautions and search.

Although the endeavours of Mr. Wynn were as unavailing as those of the detectives, his reward was considerably greater. Miss Russell, anxious to show him how deeply she appreciated his interest, admitted, when he asked her, that she had always cared a great deal more for him than any other man, and was quite willing to become his wife.

Wynn's financial condition in the past year or two, had, it was generally admitted, very considerably improved. He had been most lucky in certain speculations, had become a member of the Stock Exchange, and was looked upon as one of the shrewdest of business men. Under these circumstances Mr. Russell could find no fault with him as a prospective son-in-law, and his consent to the engagement was very easily obtained.

The cards for the wedding had been out a week, and presents were coming in by dozens. Jack was busy one day cutting strings, while Nan was undoing paper wrappings. Suddenly the girl uttered a shriek.

"What on earth is the matter?" cried Mr. Wynn, rushing to her.

"Look!" she cried, holding up a jewel-case that she had just opened. "Look! They are the lost diamonds; all of them, every one, from the necklace to the ruby butterfly."

Mr. Wynn gazed in amazement.

"Where's the card?" he asked. "Who brought them?" A search was made at once, but no card was to be found. A boy had brought the parcel, but he was a uniformed messenger boy, and there was no way of tracing him. The mysterious reappearance of the stolen gems was a nine days' sensation. Everybody in Society was talking about it, and the newspapers made a column story of it with display heads.

Then, just as it was about to die a natural death, a new sensation took its place. Mr. and Mrs. Wynn's honeymoon tour had come to a sudden end. The bride had come home to her father, and the bridegroom had sailed for Genoa on the *Fuerst Bismarck*. Some people said that divorce proceedings would be begun at once; but no one knew the cause. There were rumours by the hundreds, one as false as another, for not a soul guessed the truth.

The truth was this:

When the rupture came the bride and bridegroom were in Sicily. Jack had been making confessions. The balmy atmosphere, the moonlight nights, the rippling waters of the island, all were conducive.

"I feel," he said, "that I shouldn't have a single secret that you do not share, sweetheart!"

"Oh, Jack!" Nan protested, "you mustn't have. I am your wife, you know, and I have a right to know all about you—everything you've ever done. Have you been awfully wicked?"

"Awfully!" Jack answered, laughing, as he drew her closer to him, and kissed her upturned, expectant lips.

For a moment the man was silent.

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"I'll tell you," he went on at last. "Do you remember that day you missed your train, and I met you in Hyde Park—ran into you—nearly upset you?"

"Do I remember it? Of course I do. It was really the beginning of our courtship."

"I was mad that night. If I hadn't met you I should have killed myself. I couldn't see a day ahead. There was a prison staring me in the face."

"Oh, Jack!"

"I had borrowed money that I had no right to borrow. I had—bah! I had not borrowed it, I had stolen it, because I was over my head in speculation, and the market was going against me. The next day it must have been discovered, and—Heaven help me if it had!—disgrace, ruin, and all the rest of it."

Nan lifted her head from his shoulder and sat silently gazing out over the moonlit waters of the lake.

"You saved me!" he said passionately. "Those diamonds of yours. They were a rope thrown to a drowning man. I wanted you to come home to my mother's. It would have been so easy then; but you wouldn't, and I had to devise some other way. When I went over the house to make everything safe and secure I left an area shutter open. I——"

The bride rose suddenly to her feet.

"Stop!" she cried, in a voice that silenced him instantly.

"Nan!" he cried, and his fingers touched her arm.

She shook them off as though they had been a leper's.

"Don't touch me!" she almost shrieked; "*I despise you!*"

J. M. B.

THE ONLY WAY.

How "Absence Made the Heart Grow Fonder."

SHE was not an ordinary girl, of that there could be no mistake. She was not exactly pretty, although her face was winning and sweet, but she had a way with her that was purely original. Even her walk and the turn of her head seemed different from that of other girls.

"I don't understand her," said her masculine friends. "I don't like her," declared the members of her own sex, while the matrons of her clique put their heads together and said that it was a pity the girl had such odd little ways, she was spoiling all her chances, and that a woman with her ideas was quite a failure so far as matrimony was concerned.

As for Hugh Dornay, he didn't know exactly what to make of her. She fascinated him. When she was in the room he was always by her side. He walked with her, he talked to her, and never glanced at another girl when she was near, yet he never seemed able to form a decided opinion of her.

One day he told her as much himself. He had called on her and found her alone. He confessed as they sat over the tea table together that she was altogether a puzzle to him.

"I can't make up my mind whether I like you or not, Miss Withers," he said. "You are such a changeable girl."

"I am not sure whether that is altogether complimentary," returned the girl, in a low voice. "I am a good deal more positive in my regard for you."

"Indeed!"

"Yes." She looked away for a minute and then brought her eyes quickly to his face, a pink spot burning on each cheek. "Yes, I love you."

The young man gasped and nearly dropped the teacup he held, in his amazement. Was there ever such a startling confession? Of the two he was far the more embarrassed.

"You are surprised," went on the girl, hurriedly. "So was I. Love is always a surprise. To me it seems a kind of madness while it lasts, something as uncontrollable as it is mysterious. I have never felt like this for anyone before; I cannot understand it myself. You are a very ordinary man, not very wealthy, not very clever, not at all good looking, and yet I love you. It's all very wonderful, isn't it?"

The man stared at her dumbly, unable to say a word.

The girl laughed musically.

"It's rather an unusual confession, isn't it?" she said. "Rather unasked, too; but you needn't alarm yourself—I don't want to marry you."

"You don't want to marry me?" echoed the man in some confusion.

"No." The girl looked away, and her eyes wandered to the window with a thoughtful, intent expression. "I always liken love," she said, "to a stream running between two very different pieces of land connected by a bridge. On the one side everything is bright and green and sunny, on the other the land is grey and barren. Love, the river, runs on either side alike, but once the bridge is crossed the current seems to change.

"From the other bank the sun shines across and makes it all seem so attractive. We long to go and explore, and when we do we find ourselves imprisoned. The bridge we crossed has gone; it was only a bridge of illusion, and there is no getting back to the flowers and sunshine, however much we strive. It's all very disappointing, isn't it?"

The young man recovered himself and glanced admiringly across at the serious little speaker. She was looking quite pretty; the flush had deepened on her cheek and her eyes were soft and moist with feeling. He forgot her strange confession, and for the time was carried away by the power of her fascination. A man, he thought, with such a companion, would take the sun across with him to that other side.

"You let your imagination run away with you, Joan," he said, softly, slipping unconsciously into her Christian name. "Life is simple enough if you only look it squarely in the face."

There was a pause; the girl poured herself out another cup of tea and sat stirring it thoughtfully; the man put his down untasted on the table, as if tea drinking were an occupation too unromantic for the occasion. With a sudden impulse he got up, and, crossing to her side, leant kindly over her.

"And so you don't want to marry me, Joan?" he said, almost reproachfully.

The girl started, coloured deeply, and drew back from him.

"No! No!" she said. "Even if you loved me ever so much, I would not marry you. It would be terrible—terrible to think that you would grow gradually indifferent to me, and to know that having taken the step there was no drawing back; and yet—" she paused painfully—"I am miserable, I love you so. I want you near me always—I want you always."

She broke down with something like a sob and buried her face in her hands. The man looked at her helplessly for a moment, and then, kneeling at her side, drew her hands gently down.

"Joan," he said, "you dear, romantic little soul, look at me."

Joan obeyed with swimming eyes.

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"Now put these sentimental ideas on one side. You and I, Joan, are going to be a practical couple. We are not going to expect such a great deal of the other side of the river you spoke of, and then we shall not be disappointed. Joan, you must marry me."

The girl drew herself away from his arms, and shook her head vehemently.

"Don't ask me, pray—pray don't ask me!" she cried. "You don't love me, you know you don't; and even if you cared for me as earnestly as I care for you, it would only be worse still. I should only have the more to lose. No," she turned and faced him eagerly, "you must cure me—disillusion me. Let me see that it is only an infatuation—that you are only an ordinary man, after all."

"I could easily do that," said the young man, soberly; "but I doubt whether you would listen. Love, little girl, always idealises. You look at me through rosy-coloured spectacles and magnify my virtues and overlook my faults. Whatever I do now, and whatever I have done in the past, would be excused in your eyes."

"No! no!" said the girl. "Indeed, I will listen. Dear Hugh, I want to be disillusioned."

But the young man only shook his head.

"Even if you listened you would not believe," he said gently. "Now listen, Joan. I am going to suggest a remedy, a seldom failing remedy, and that is time. I am going away from you for six months. At the end of that time, dear, you will laugh at yourself, at your folly, or my name is not Hugh Dornay. Shall we do as I say?"

"For six long months!" echoed the girl, with a paling face. "It's a terrible remedy; but, yes, I will try it."

* * * * *

"Joan!"

"Hugh!"

They had met again, not in her little drawing-room as before, but in the country lanes, where the light summer breeze frolicked with the hay and carried it away, mingling it with the scent of the honeysuckle. The six months had barely gone, and there they were again, face to face.

The girl hung her head, and the colour rushed into her face as the young man sprang forward and caught her hand in his with every expression of delight.

"Well, Joan," he said in a voice which trembled with a strange emotion, "and are you disillusioned?"

He waited anxiously for the reply which never came, and, bending down, read the answer in her eyes.

"No, dear Joan? Well, I am glad, for I have just thought of another remedy which we must try together. Joan, I have caught your complaint—I want to be disillusioned, too."

The girl looked up with the pent-up love of six months in her eyes.

"How?" she whispered softly.

"I thought we would cross that bridge of illusion together, hand in hand," he said. "Whatever disappointments there may be in store for us we will share. Joan, my dear little Joan, I love you. Will you? It is the only way."

The girl raised her face trustfully, yet a little wistfully, to his.

"Yes," she echoed, quickly; "it is the only way."

D. C. L.

IF YOU'VE FAILED

in business, it's perhaps because you have taken up the wrong work. You should ascertain from an unbiassed person the real bent of your mind, and to do this you should send a specimen of your handwriting to *RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.*, inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

JOHN'S BURGLAR HUNT.

"John, hark!"

Mrs. McMillinger sat straight up in her bed, and listened to a noise she seemed to hear downstairs.

"What is it, Maria?" inquired Mr. McMillinger drowsily.

"It seemed like somebody talking. Listen!"

Mr. McMillinger listened. He, too, thought he heard something.

"I will see what it is," speaking very loudly and moving very leisurely. "Don't be alarmed, Maria. We are well armed; besides these two revolvers," he continued, in a high-pitched voice intended to terrify any unauthorised persons that might be in the house, "I have a heavy stick and a large paper-weight. Be calm, Maria."

He crawled out of bed, collected his arsenal, and the procession moved downstairs in the following order: Mr. McMillinger, with a revolver in each hand, heavy stick under one arm, and a paper weight under the other. Mrs. McMillinger ready to scream, with front hair in curl papers, and the lamp in her hand.

At the landing half-way down, Mr. McMillinger stopped.

"Maria," he observed sternly, "it is necessary for you to go in front. You have the lamp. I'll protect you."

Mrs. McMillinger took her place in front as directed, and the procession moved on again. At the foot of the stairs John stopped and took up a commanding position near the hall rack.

"Now, Maria, go ahead with the lamp into this room on the left. I will remain here to see if anybody rushes out. If anybody does rush out," he exclaimed, grinding his teeth in a manner horrible to hear, "I will put fourteen bullets through him, knock him down with this paper-weight, and break every bone in his body with this stick!"

Mrs. McMillinger went into the room on the left and looked round.

"Do you see anything, Maria?" asked her husband in a voice of thunder.

"No, John."

"Go through the other rooms," he roared, bracing himself firmly against the wall.

While John remained in the hall armed to the teeth, pale with iron resolution, and trembling with ferocity, Maria explored the rooms and came back.

"Did you see anything?" he demanded.

"Not a thing, John."

"Give me the lamp."

He handed his weapons to Maria, took the lamp, and with dauntless bravery went through the rooms himself.

"It wasn't anything, Maria," he said with extreme disgust. "You didn't hear anything or anybody."

The procession moved up the stairway on the return trip.

"You must try to overcome this timidity of yours, Maria," said Mr. McMillinger, as he put down the lamp and relieved his wife of the load of deadly weapons. "If I hadn't been here to protect you," he grumbled, crawling back into bed, "you would have frightened yourself to death." P. O. W.

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The Tragedy at Ivydene.

Told in Three Acts.

During their tenancy of the villa in Rutland Road they were known to the other residents of the street as the Ivydenes, from the name of the villa itself, which was painted on the porch over the door. When they are referred to now they are described as "the young people," in order to distinguish them from the present occupants.

Rutland Road is a small thoroughfare, comprising just forty-eight houses, twenty-four on each side, each exactly resembling its neighbour, after the manner of the modern villa residences.

The houses had not been built long enough at that time for the Venetian blinds to have been worn out, and this naturally intensified the resemblance, and so much alike were these villas that the tenants discovered that one key would fit all the doors in the road, while the keys attached to the doors of the inner rooms were equally interchangeable.

The villas were small, but the rent was not in proportion, and the neighbourhood was regarded as select, almost aristocratic, and these two factors effectually prevented the road from being invaded by working men and their families. There was an air of dignity about the thoroughfare which impressed you; it was easy to understand that appearances went for a good deal in Rutland Road, and that the residents endeavoured to maintain appearances.

Being so eminently respectable, the residents did not gossip; had it been otherwise, they would have known more about the life story of the young people at Ivydene. Of course, it might happen that Mrs. Lindisfarne met Mrs. Retreat—people were familiarly known by the names of their villas—at a social function in the district, but it was remarkable that there was scarcely any neighbouring, to use a homely phrase.

This explains why the Ivydenes were not on visiting terms with any other resident of Rutland Avenue—that is, Rutland Road, the slip may be pardoned, seeing that the oldest resident was always agitating in the local newspaper that the existing name was intolerable, and that "Road" should be replaced by "Avenue."

Ivydene had been to let for nearly three months, which was surprising, for the villas let as a rule very quickly, and those residents who had invested their money in the purchase of one of the forty-eight began to wonder if the road were about to undergo a reverse of fortune, and the houses to fall in value.

This feeling was strong in Rosendale, which was exactly opposite Ivydene; it is vexatious to be continually confronted by an empty house, it is far worse than being next door to one, as in the latter case you do not see quite so much of it. It was consequently with a sentiment of relief and thankfulness that Mrs. Rosendale, peeping out from the side of the curtain, saw the landlord's agent take away the obnoxious board "To Let." Others had noticed the removal, and curiosity—dignified, stand-offish curiosity—was aroused concerning the new tenants.

"Newly married, and not up to very much!" was the pronouncement of Mrs. Retreat, as an uncovered van, containing furniture, passed her window. The Retreat was the first house at the principal end of Rutland Road, so she enjoyed the privilege of being the first to know anything that happened to the road from outside, as it were. The house opposite was occupied by a widower with a housekeeper, but the latter could not share the privilege, as housekeepers didn't count.

Three minutes afterwards Mrs. Rosendale made the very same mental observation. The furniture, of which there was not much, was painfully new and frail; bent wood and bamboo furniture prevailed, the kitchen table was plain deal, cheap and not over solid, and the pictures—judging by the glimpse which Mrs. Rosendale caught of one, were also cheap. The goods were taken over by the agent, who had apparently been commissioned to get things ship-shape for the newcomers.

During the next four days the curtains in the two adjoining villas and the six opposite ones were agitated every time the sound of wheels was heard, and finally the patience of the watchers was rewarded. A cab drove up to Ivydene and a young man alighted; then, after some waiting and arranging of a dress, a young woman also alighted, availing herself of the proffered hand. Luckily, it was a hansom, or there would have been great disappointment at Rosendale, and the lady of the house would have envied the occupants of the villas adjoining Ivydene to a greater extent than usual.

There was a bright, happy look in the face of the young husband; his clothes were new, his linen dazzlingly white. A really good, loving husband, in the opinion of the several ladies who had their eyes fixed on him.

The wife's face was calm and stately; it lacked the warmth of the young man's. Her dress and general appearance betokened the well-to-do class, and belied the cheapness of the furniture. She cast a glance up and down the street as the cab rattled away, and passed through the gate, up the narrow path to the front door which her husband had just opened. The door closed on them and on the first scene of a tragedy.

The following morning, at a quarter past eight, the door of Ivydene was opened and the husband sallied forth on his way "to business," without doubt. His wife, robed in an elegant dressing-gown, followed him down the path to the gate, where an affectionate farewell took place. She watched him till he reached the end of the road, where he turned and waved a final adieu. Her face was animated this morning, and her appearance created a more favourable impression in the minds of the neighbours.

About six o'clock in the evening she left the villa, dressed elegantly and fashionably, and walked in the direction of the station; a few minutes later they returned together, he carrying a bunch of flowers which he had purchased for her in the city. Quite a model couple! So said Rutland Road.

Sometimes she would be dressed in the morning, and would go with him to the railway station, but as a rule she bade him adieu in her dressing-gown at the gate. In the evening, too,

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she discontinued her walks to meet him after a time, and waited for him at the gate, always smartly dressed. They saw him come home evening after evening with a smiling face and a bunch of flowers or a novel.

The months went past, and Mrs. Rosendale fancied that the step of the young husband was not so elastic as formerly; his clothes were not so spruce—always carefully brushed and neat, but just a trifle worn, they seemed. Mrs. Lindisfarne declared to her husband that the coat was shiny in certain parts when he was walking in the sun. The wife did not come to the door either to say good-bye, or to welcome him.

A whisper went all through Rutland Road one morning, and the residents watched for the baby to be seen at the window. That time came at length, and mother and little daughter came to the upper window to wave good-bye to daddy.

The baby grew apace; the father's weary look vanished, although his clothes became still less spruce. It was wonderful to see how his face lighted up as he turned the corner and strained his eyes to catch a glimpse of the baby face at the window. It was Mrs. Retreat who noticed this fact; she was able to see him for a few yards before he turned into Rutland Road, and she was astonished at the difference in his demeanour in the course of a few yards.

He still brought something home, but not the bunch of flowers. It was a few leaves of ivy, or a piece of a creeper, now and then a sprig of geranium. It was suggestive of a difference in point of money, but of undiminished affection. If he could not afford to buy, he could and would pluck from the hedges as he passed and take home something to show her that the will was there if the means were lacking. And, sometimes, he carried a toy.

But the wife seldom watched for him at this period; the old custom had fallen into disuse. The little girl waited in the bay window, and clapped her hands with glee when she saw him, running to the door as fast as she could toddle, and standing in the hall till he entered. How like her mother she was growing! No wonder he loved the child, thought Mrs. Rosendale; he had a double reason for it—it was his child and she was so like the mother whom he idolised!

It was summer again, and they saw him in the little front garden after his return in the evening, playing with the little one till her bedtime arrived. The mother went out as soon as he reached home—went out in smart dresses and smarter hats, constantly changed, to seek some relaxation, no doubt. She often went out during the daytime, too, leaving the child to play by itself, or asleep. Rutland Road wondered how she did it, wondered when she did her work, and how she managed to dress so well, while her husband's clothes grew more and more shabby. Mrs. Rosendale, who chanced to meet him one evening as he emerged from the railway station in the full glare of the sun, asserted most positively that his coat was actually green in places.

The little girl came with him to the door in the morning now. There was such a merry good-bye, and he seemed to bury his face in her curls. But in spite of this happiness, his step became slow and lagging, and his face was possessed by an indescribable expression of weariness. If he passed any of his neighbours whom he knew by sight, he would try to hide the frayed edges of his cuffs and collars. His linen was clean, but the signs of wear were very evident.

But there came a morning when he emerged from the hall alone and shut the door softly, so softly! The doctor came during the day, and the father returned home much earlier than usual. He almost ran along the street, so anxious was he to gain access to the house and to the room where——

Two days afterwards the blinds were drawn, and a little coffin was taken into the house. And the second part of the tragedy ended.

It would have been difficult for many of his former friends to have recognised the tenant of Ivydene after the funeral. His face was white and drawn, and his walk had lost all the springiness of yore. The black clothes were not worn long; he was soon going to work in the old garments, which were very dark. Poverty was stamped on him in large letters. The mother, on the contrary, still dressed well; she, also, was soon out of deep mourning and going out as before. There was still one other trace of the old time left—he brought home a little sprig of a flower or a leaf or two, to give to her. And as she left the offering on the table, he ceased to offer it to her personally, and placed it in a vase which was set in front of her seat at the table. Quite by accident Mrs. Rosendale heard that; a boy, cleaning windows at Ivydene one evening (the husband was ashamed of them, they were so dirty), had noticed it.

It was getting late in summer, it was almost autumn, when the neighbours saw a cart pull up at the door of Ivydene. They watched from behind the curtains, and they saw some furniture taken away.

"Selling some of the home!" murmured Mrs. Rosendale.

About five o'clock they saw Mrs. Ivydene come out, dressed for a journey, and carrying a small bag. She was as stately as ever. What did it mean?

He came home from the office at his usual time, and with the weary gait that had grown so familiar. How thin and ill he looked. It had never struck them so forcibly before, and they kept their eyes on the door after it had shut behind him, as though they fancied he must have gone through the woodwork instead of opening the door in the proper way. It was while they were thus engaged that they saw the door open violently and Ivydene spring down the two steps and dash to the gate. His hat was off, he clutched convulsively at a sheet of notepaper and glared in wild despair along the street. Whatever was the matter? It was growing dusk, and Mrs. Rosendale was terrified.

He raised the sheet of paper and scanned it. Then he raised his hands aloft, still clutching the paper in one, in a mute appeal to the Power above, stumbled back to the steps, and sank on the lower one. He buried his face in his hands, and remained still except for an occasional slight tremor which agitated his frame.

Mrs. Rosendale was genuinely alarmed. It was dusk, and night was falling so rapidly that she could not see exactly what was happening. She waited in nervous anxiety for her own partner to return for the day, so that she might enlist his aid for the purpose of lending succour over the way if needed. But Mr. Rosendale was tired, and declared that he could not go trotting about after other people's troubles.

It was past ten o'clock when Mrs. Rosendale prevailed on her lord and master to go over the way and see if anything had happened to Mr. Ivydene. He growled that *he* had not seen anyone on the step of that villa as he came down the road, but he supposed he wouldn't get any peace if he didn't go. So he went, with a taper, and some wax vestas to procure a light if required.

Yes, he could dimly see a figure on the doorstep! He struck a vesta and lighted the taper. A sheet of paper lay at his feet and he involuntarily picked it up and read what was written thereon. Only a few words, a few cruel, death-dealing words to a loving heart! "Don't try to find out where I've gone. I'm sick to death of this poverty and wish I had never married you. I want something better, and I'll have it."

Mr. Rosendale's face paled. He dropped the paper, and raised the head of the huddled figure so that the light of the flickering taper fell on it. It was pale and tearstained—and cold!

And thus, on that balmy evening of late summer, the curtain fell on the last scene of the tragedy of love that had not its reward!

George Day.

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Mr. Bowser, Hypnotist.

It Wasn't His Fault that His Experiments Were Not a Success.

WHEN dinner had been finished the other evening, Mrs. Bowser noticed that Mr. Bowser was looking at her in a strange manner, and when he had continued this for several minutes she asked:

"Have you got a headache or a sore throat this evening?"

"No," he answered.

"Is there something you're trying to puzzle out?"

"No."

"Well, your countenance looks as blank as if you'd fallen from a haystack and struck on your head. I thought something must have happened."

"You needn't worry yourself about my blank countenance, Mrs. Bowser. As a matter of fact, you are not competent to tell when a man's whole soul is in his face or when he has no more feeling than a cabbage head."

It was policy for her to maintain silence, and he walked up and down for five minutes with his hands crossed under his coat-tails before he continued:

"A rather queer thing happened at the office this afternoon. A man named Gilbert came in on some business, and the minute I caught his eye I hypnotised him. He was like one in a trance. When I told him to sit down, stand up or walk about, he obeyed me like a child. He would have flung himself out of the window if I had told him to. It's the first time I ever knew that I had hypnotic powers, and the idea rather upsets me. Did you ever suspect that I had this power?"

"Never," replied Mrs. Bowser, with a laugh.

"What ever are you giggling about?" he demanded as his ears began to twitch.

"About your hypnotic powers. Did you take this Mr. Gilbert out after the performance and treat him?"

"Of course not! What do you mean?"

"I thought it quite likely that he was working you for drinks."

"My good woman, you ought to be sent to an asylum for fools!" shouted Mr. Bowser as the blood reddened his face and neck and took away all the blankness. "If I ever start to tell you anything, you always twist it about to make out that I haven't brains enough to smoke a pipe. Did you ever see a case of hypnotism?"

"I don't think so."

"Then don't try to be too funny. I say I hypnotised that man. More than that, I have discovered that I have a great power that way. I can hypnotise you, the cat, the cook, almost anyone else. Just watch that cat for a minute."

He sat down with his hands on his knees and fastened his eyes on those of the cat, which was sitting on the floor a few feet away. She glared back at him for a few seconds, and then her eyes began to grow green, her tail to become bushy and her back to arch.

"She'll go mad if you don't stop," cautioned Mrs. Bowser.

"Keep quiet. Don't break the spell," whispered Mr. Bowser as he continued his glare. "She came under the influence sooner than I expected, and it will be a complete success. By George, look at that back! Now watch her while I tell her to jump down and roll over on the floor."

He gave the order but the cat meowed and spat at him. He repeated it, and she uttered a long drawn yeowl.

"You are driving her mad!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser as she rose up to flee.

"Shut up! Now, cat, you jump to the floor and roll over. Jump, I say!"

She jumped. She jumped to the piano, clawed off the cover, bounded to the floor and after a "spit" and a howl she ran down the basement stairs and scared the cook out of her seven senses as she whisked out into the back yard.

"Didn't I tell you I could do it?" exclaimed Mr. Bowser in great glee as he rose up. "That cat will be a beautiful subject to work on, and in less than a week I'll have her standing on her head and doing all kinds of tricks. I will now exercise my powers on you."

"You won't do anything of the kind!" protested Mrs. Bowser, "and you'd also better let the cat alone. She was scared instead of hypnotised."

"Nothing of the sort. She was under the influence as plain as day. Look me in the eye for a minute."

"I shan't do it."

"Look me in the eye. Now raise your right arm."

Mrs. Bowser turned her back on him.

"Now lift your left foot."

No lifting took place, but Mrs. Bowser started down the hall to go upstairs.

"Woman, I command you to return!" shouted Mr. Bowser, but she did not feel the "influence" and passed on out of his sight.

"I'll bring her to it! I'll bring her to it!" he muttered to himself as he turned away. "I've got the power and she feels it, but I'll take her unawares next time. I'll go down and hypnotise the cook."

The cook promptly objected. He had scarcely explained his errand and asked her to fix her eyes on his for a minute when she said:

"I'll do nothing of the sort, and if you don't get out of this kitchen I'll throw up my job."

"But, my dear woman, I wish to carry out an experiment," he pleaded.

"Then carry it out on somebody else. I'm here to do the cooking at twenty pounds a year, and nobody can make a fool of me. I had a brother who was fool enough to look a man in the eye, and he went to the hospital with his legs all tied up in knots."

Mr. Bowser turned away with a sigh, but luck was with him. Just at that moment the basement bell rang, and he went to

THIS IS OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER.

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the door to find a travelling tinker who wanted to mend old tinware.

"Come in," was the hearty greeting. "I don't think we have anything to mend, but I'd like to explain a matter to you. You have heard of hypnotism, of course?"

"It's where a feller glares at you?" replied the tinker

"Yes, something that way."

"And you lose your mind and he makes you do as he will?"

"That's it. I think I'm a hypnotist, and I want to experiment a little. You look to me like a good subject, and——"

"No fooling, sir! I'm a hardworking man, and I don't stand no nonsense."

"Look me in the eye," whispered Mr. Bowser.

"I'll do it, sir, but——"

"Now let yourself seem to sink away as if going to sleep. Keep your eyes on mine."

"Don't get me roused, sir, because when I'm roused I'm dangerous."

"Keep quiet, tinker. Now, then, you are in a burning building and must escape by the window. Do you see the flames around you?"

"I do."

"Do you feel the heat?"

"I do."

"Do you realise your peril?"

"I do, sir, and I'll be jiggered if I'll let any man make a Punch and Judy out of me! Here's for you!"

It was the cook's yells that brought Mrs. Bowser down stairs, and she found Mr. Bowser on his back on the dining room floor in a semi-unconscious condition. The tinker had given him one on the jaw and got out.

"It was the hypnotism, the hypnotism, missus!" explained the cook as she stood with arms uplifted.

"Yes, it was the hypnotism," whispered Mrs. Bowser as she bent over the recumbent form. "He's got it, and got it bad and while I'm making a poultice for his jaw you get the camphor and take off his shoes and collar."

"And will he live, mum?"

"Oh, yes, but he won't be a hypnotist any more. He'll probably turn to phrenology."

M. Quad.

A Diplomatist.

HE: "The artists say that five feet four inches is the divine height for a woman." His darling (crossly): "You know I am five feet eight." He (quickly): "You are more than divine, dear."

She Knew.

OLD FLINK: "I doubt if one man out of twenty can recall to memory the language he used in proposing." Young Stewpid: "Probably not. But the girl can. Mine did. When the breach of promise suit came up she was able to repeat my proposal word for word."

From Information Received.

"WHY do you always question patients so closely about what they eat? Does the information you get help you to diagnose their cases?" Doctor: "Oh, no! But by doing so I am enabled to guess what their station in life is, and how much in fees I can probably get out of them."

The Grocer Beat Him.

JOHNNY'S grandpa was explaining to Johnny about a conjurer he had seen, and about the wonderful tricks he did, and finished up by telling him of the hat-trick—how this man could bring oranges, eggs, and fancy boxes, all out of an empty hat. Johnny wondered, but then said quickly: "Grandpa, that is nothing to what the grocer up our street can do." "Why, Johnny, what can he do?" "Oh, he can give you the 1s. 10d. and 1s. 6d. butter all out of the same tub!"

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

British and Irish Rivers.

FIRST PRIZE - £10. SECOND PRIZE - £2.
THIRD to SIXTH PRIZES - £1 each.

Below will be found fifteen sets of words, each set describing the name of a river in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

NOTE THESE FACTS. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until we tell you to send it in.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

SECOND LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:

To flow gently..... Ouse.

16. A large quadruped with two humps on its back ..... 16 .....
17. Commit to memory a passage..... 17 .....
18. To put on..... 18 .....
19. A piece of timber used as a support..... 19 .....
20. A standard ..... 20 .....
21. To baffle ..... 21 .....
22. A sieve ..... 22 .....
23. Spars of a ladder, grind! ..... 23 .....
24. Cleanse a stream ..... 24 .....
25. The dark ocean..... 25 .....
26. Natural instruments of mastication ..... 26 .....
27. An itinerant seller ..... 27 .....
28. The quarter towards which the wind blows..... 28 .....
29. A female sheep ..... 29 .....
30. The outer covering of anything... 30 .....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

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The Major's Wife.

What a Girl's Love of Adventure Did.

On the platform of a railway station, in Dresden, a varied crowd was moving to and fro as the time approached for the departure of the Leipsic train. Passengers were constantly arriving and hastily pushing their way towards the entrance, when two ladies alighted from a carriage, and passing through the waiting-room, walked slowly up to the train.

One was tall and slender, with an attractive face, which in a crowd, however, might be passed by, whereas her friend's dainty figure would command a second glance everywhere.

Her sparkling brown eyes lighted up a piquant face of pale brunette type, while her fresh, red lips revealed two rows of splendid teeth. Rich black hair curled softly round a perfect brow, her travelling hat only partly concealing her heavy braids.

"I must confess, Helen," said the taller lady, turning to her companion, "I do not envy you your trip to-day; in this heat, and in a crowded ladies' compartment, you will suffer torments and think with longing of our shady garden and cool verandah."

"Everything in its time, Emma," was Helen's quick rejoinder. "Sitting in the shade for a long time makes one eager to travel in the heat for a change—I am sure I shall arrive safe and sound at Leipsic."

"That point of view many others seem to share, as the station swarms with people, but I still maintain that only your brain could conceive so crazy an idea; you, especially, are fond of such eccentric enterprises."

"Emma, Emma, yours is a case of the fox and the grapes. If you could go with me all would be well; my idea is not crazy at all, but very original. Won't it be splendid to arrive so unexpectedly at Hansen's? Fancy my sudden appearance at the garden festival as a gipsy, mystifying and tricking everyone. No one will be able to imagine who it is, telling such truths, disclosing the past and boldly prophesying the future. Before people discover it is I, I shall have disappeared and returned to you. I always dearly wished to have an adventure."

"Well, you little enthusiast," laughed Emma, "you will have plenty of adventures at this festival. Hearts you may conquer, too, as your southern complexion and bright eyes in a gipsy costume will be most effective.

"I really believe the train is just going to start. Come, we must look for a compartment." Quickly passing along the train the two friends searched for a seat, and then stopped for a moment before the crowded ladies' compartment.

"There's no room here," said Helen. "Let's try to find a non-smoking compartment."

"The next one is full," answered Emma, "but further in front I saw an empty one. See, a gentleman is entering it."

Helen hastened to the open door, then turned quickly and whispered to her friend:

"But, Emma, there is only one gentleman in this compartment. I can't travel alone with him."

"Oh, this is your love of adventure," mocked Emma; "as soon as one appears in the distance you take to your heels. But, indeed," she continued, after a pause, "the gentleman looks quite respectable and trustworthy. I think you may safely risk it."

"It is easy for you to make fun of me, but just because I am undertaking this trip all alone, I don't wish to do anything imprudent."

"Wait," cried Emma triumphantly, "step in and trust to me. I have an idea that will protect and amuse you. Quick, there is no time to be lost."

"Take your seats, please!" cried the guards. The doors were shut, and the last farewells spoken through the windows. Helen leant out, waiting to hear the good idea her friend had promised her. She had not noticed that the gentleman, after courteously bowing to her, had risen and was looking over her shoulder along the platform. Emma, however, saw him, and called to her friend with a merry laugh: "Good-bye, dear Helen; remember me to your husband, the stern major, and ask him to send you to us soon again!"

A shrill whistle, and the train slowly started. Helen with difficulty suppressed the laugh caused by her friend's last words, and took her seat. How could Emma ever think of such a thing! But it certainly was delightful, and, moreover, very prudent, as this new and unexpected dignity altered her position entirely.

When they were out of the station Helen rose to open the window, which, however, would not yield to her efforts.

"Allow me, madam," said a deep, pleasant voice. Indeed the stranger had addressed her as "madam." So the ruse had been successful. One moment Helen hesitated, then she turned, grave and dignified, as would become a major's wife. Yet the pleasure at the novelty of the situation shone in her eyes when she spoke:

"If you will be so good; it is suffocating in here."

The stranger, a tall, athletic man, with fine brow and deep eyes, gave an impression of unusual intelligence. He certainly was a person of distinction and position.

The open window and the words of thanks led to a conversation which soon became animated and aroused Helen's keenest interest. She had complained of the tropical heat; as consolation the stranger gave her a description of the discomforts of an African noon, with its unbearable glare, an Indian midsummer, that would be fatal to a European unless he took refuge in the cool woods of the Himalaya mountains. Everything this man said sounded so real, as though he told of his own experiences.

Helen listened enchanted, losing no opportunity of urging him on by intelligent questions. He pictured for her the cities of the East—Delhi and Singapore, the cosmopolitan Shanghai and the imperial Peking, the yellow swamps of the plains, the mountain chains of China, with their unpronounceable names, and at last, he spoke of the magic beauty of dawn on the Indian Ocean.

"Have you seen all that yourself?" asked Helen eagerly.

"I spent several years in India."

"For pleasure?" She regretted at once her indiscreet question, but she did so want to know who he was. He certainly did not look like a merchant.

"Not altogether," he replied, laughing. "Many things one has to endure cannot be called pleasure. And, on the other hand, the astounding wealth of experience gained far exceeds the word pleasure. I was there to make geological researches," he added, as her questioning glance still rested on him.

So he was a scholar. Helen found this most interesting, as she had often wished to meet a famous professor. He did not seem old and dignified enough for that. And with what a strange expression his eyes rested upon her small person—they were beautiful, deep eyes—his voice had a sonorous ring that thrilled the musical sense of Helen.

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"What an advantage men have in this world!" said the young girl, as she looked out upon the passing landscape. "They can travel and make everything real in life their own, while we dabble a little in art and so-called accomplishments."

"Oh, do not find fault with a woman's lot," he replied eagerly. "No one knows better than a scientist how one-sided our culture is. Believe me, I have often felt a real longing for the subjects we must neglect and which impress me as the special sphere of gifted, high-minded women. Only yesterday, in our magnificent gallery, I felt like a poor stranger among those marvels of art."

Now Helen was in her element. Art, music, literature—everything that filled and inspired her young mind, was touched upon in the following hours. She was charming in her bright, unconscious mood, and her companion became more and more engrossed in contemplation of her large, beaming eyes.

Suddenly he remembered that his travelling companion was the wife of another. He was silent for a while. Thoughtfully he passed his hand over his brow and said:

"After our interesting conversation you will certainly pardon the wish that we should not part as strangers. Allow me to introduce myself to you—Professor Roditz, of Halle."

"Professor Roditz?" cried Helen, joyfully; in her excitement she seized his hand with a hearty grasp.

"Oh, how happy this makes me! How often I have wished to meet you! I have read with great enthusiasm your letters of travel."

The Professor bowed, smiling. "You touch a weak point in an author. It is pleasant, when one is away, to be understood and appreciated at home; I presume you read my letters with your husband?"

Helen did not notice the slight note of pain in this unexpected question. She had forgotten her friend's parting remarks. After all, though, she would probably never see him again, so she must think of some comical name, as that of her supposed husband. She would much rather have shaken hands with her companion and said: "My name is Helen Elden, and I hope to see you again."

These thoughts and considerations crossed each other in Helen's brain, while the Professor, after having presented himself, mused and wondered too.

The short "Yes" of the Major's wife, the sudden embarrassed silence that followed it, perplexed him. What might be the cause of it, and why was the wedding ring missing on her hand? Why did she not tell him her name?

He knew he ought not to inquire further, as she seemed intentionally to withhold it, and, indeed, it mattered little to him whether he knew the name of one whom he, in all probability, would never see again. Whence that intense regret he felt at this thought? It seemed impossible to separate from her forever; he must again see those wonderful brown eyes,

Helen listened enchanted, losing no opportunity of urging him on by intelligent questions.

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this dainty figure; he must once—only once—kiss that small hand that was now smoothing back the dark curls.

But he quickly subdued such wishes as contrary to his strict sense of honour. He could not help, however, giving a few moments of thought to the happiness he would feel in calling such a woman his own. What a change such a fairy would make in his study. He felt oppressed—he rose and glanced out of the window—then he turned again to Helen, who, absorbed in her own thoughts and fearing the possible questions of the professor, had not noticed the interruption of the conversation.

Roditz resolutely commenced. "Your destination is Leipsic, madam? I shall not stop there but go through to Halle, and before long shall undertake a long journey. When on sea or in the Asiatic mountains I shall think of my native land. You, too, will be in my memory, and the happy moments spent with you. So I should like to know to whom my thoughts turn—will you pardon me if I beg of you your name?"

"Helen," the young girl whispered softly; he scarcely heard her.

"Helen," he repeated. "The name is very dear to me. It was my mother's."

Her sympathy was aroused.

"And your mother shares your home?"

"No, she is dead. I am alone in the world, and probably for ever," replied the Professor gravely. "A man when very young, has his dreams of a bright future, of a home full of love and sunshine; but such dreams do not always come true," he added, with peculiar emphasis.

Helen was silent—she began to suspect the meaning of his words. A feeling of pain shot through her heart. Would that she had never entered into this deception; that this idea never had occurred to Emma.

The Professor saw her confusion, and used the opportunity for further questioning.

"You gave me your Christian name, so dear to me, but your husband's name I should like to know, too; even should I never see you again, it would be a pleasure to me to watch your life from afar."

Helen shivered. At last the dreaded moment had come. Should she, indeed, tell the falsehood, deceive the confidence of this man? And yet—she could not make up her mind to the difficult confession; she must cling to her *rôle* and pronounce the name she had thought of. What mattered it? Something like defiance stirred within her. She would never see the Professor again. What difference would it make under what family name he thought of her?

She whispered "Fritters." The Professor bowed courteously. "I thank you, madam. And have you lived long in Leipsic? Have you much social life there?"

"Thank Heaven!" breathed Helen. This question at least could be answered generally.

"No, we moved there quite lately, and we rarely go into society," she replied, thinking of her home, her parents, and her younger brothers and sisters. "We have, however, a very pleasant circle of congenial friends; we read, have music, amateur theatricals and dances, spending many happy hours together. My domestic duties fill up the rest of my time most pleasantly"—and again she only thought of her sisters and brothers, how attached they were to her, how she worked and played with them, thought and cared for them.

"I can well imagine you busy in your home," remarked the Professor, "giving and receiving happiness, brightening everything with your harmonious personality and cultured mind. You certainly have children?"

"Children!" Helen was aghast, and looked at him with terrified eyes; this question she had thought impossible. "Children!" Oh, this dreadful question—but it served her right. Why had she played such a part?

Now she had a real adventure, as she had so often wished for. But such an one. Children, she and children.

"Yes, no—that is—— Oh, Heaven," stammered she, and covering her face with her hands burst into tears.

The Professor was visibly disturbed.

"I regret deeply to have touched a painful subject, madam; do forgive me."

Quickly Helen uncovered her face, and, suppressing her tears, looked up. A painful subject. What did the Professor mean? It was maddening. How should she disentangle herself?

"Professor," she began hesitatingly—a sudden crash, a jerk—the carriage rocked—Helen felt faint, and lost consciousness.

* * * * * *

On the promenade in Leipsic stands a handsome house, through the open windows of which the perfume of the syringa blossoms was wafted on that morning.

In a simply furnished room on the first floor lay the occupant, comfortably stretched in a lounge chair before the open window, looking up into the green foliage of the trees, while the aroma of his cigar mingled with the perfume of the blossoms without.

He was a man of fine physique, between thirty and forty, with a fresh, good-natured face. He enjoyed the fine morning, and was evidently in the best humour.

Suddenly the door was thrown open, and a clumsy figure stumbled in. "Major, Major, another telegram."

It was Christian, the Major's faithful servant, the sworn friend of all the children and dogs of the entire neighbourhood.

The Major looked at the disturbed face of his servant, and said, laughingly: "You are always the same ass, Christian. One would think it would burn your fingers. Give it to me."

Christian stared. "Oh," he said, "if only the telegram does not bring bad news—last night I dreamt of my dead mother, and you——" He stopped bewildered at the expression on his master's face, who had in the meantime opened the envelope.

The Major stood, paper in hand, straight as an arrow, gazing into space as though he saw a ghost.

"The dickens!" he cried; "this is the most confounded nonsense I ever heard of. Here is again my 'wife.' It is enough to drive any one wild! Christian, come here. Look at me and tell me. Am I married?"

The Major's eyes sparkled so fiercely that it took Christian some time to recover himself.

"I can't say, Major," stammered the man.

"You can't say, you blockhead?" thundered the Major, pacing up and down the room. Suddenly he stopped and again took up the telegram. "It may be a mistake after all. But no, there is my name in plain letters: 'Major Fritters.' I am the only man of that name in the city. It is a malicious mystification, an infamous trick. But I shall find the miscreants. I shall——" And again he began to rage furiously up and down the room.

In the midst of this pandemonium the door opened and an officer entered, who, after a few seconds of most profound astonishment, threw himself into the nearest chair and burst into such uncontrollable laughter that the Major stopped, frowning heavily. "Will you soon have finished your confounded laughter?" he asked angrily. "I am not in the mood for joking. That I will tell you at once."

"But allow me," replied Captain Richter, recovering himself. "This is more than I can understand. I come here by appointment to ride with you, and find you raging up and down the room like a tiger. As soon as you become conscious of my presence, you abuse me to an extent that would call for a challenge were we not such good friends."

"I believe you are right," sighed the Major. "You must forgive me; but if one has to endure what I have to-day, even the gentlest soul would go beside himself. Here, read this rot." He passed him the telegrams. "This one first. Read it aloud that I can hear it again, and then tell me whether I am crazy, or what else it means."

He threw himself with resignation into a chair. Captain Richter unfolded the first telegram and read it with a voice that expressed unlimited astonishment. "Major Fritters, Leipsic. Railway accident. Your wife hurt. Come at

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once. Professor Roditz." Captain Richter let the paper fall.

"Well, I suppose you wired back there must be a mistake somewhere."

"Of course. I wired 'Notice of accident sent to my address by mistake.' Thereupon I received this second message." He handed the Captain the second telegram, which read: "Mistake impossible; Mrs. Fritters herself gave your address."

"This is most extraordinary," exclaimed the Captain.

"You see," said the Major, "you feel exactly as I did. It is maddening. Who pretends to be my wife? Who is Professor Roditz? I don't know him; I have a faint recollection of having seen his name in the newspapers. What in all the world has given that man the impression that I am married? How does he happen, with such obstinacy, to demand that I shall hasten to the wounded woman supposed to be my wife?"

"It is certainly the craziest idea I ever heard."

"Yes; I can't understand it."

"I should simply wire this Professor: 'I am unmarried, and shall not come.'"

"At first I thought of doing that, but after thinking the matter over, concluded that it would not do. I must go. You see that a lady, hurt in a railway accident, has given my name and address—is perhaps dying—that a Professor Roditz thinks she is my wife in spite of my telegrams, stating it is a mistake. What is the meaning of this mystery? Who has the audacity to pretend to be my wife? This riddle I must solve at once, and on the spot."

"You are right," mused the Captain. "Perhaps you will find an unfortunate woman, who, forced by circumstances, has a reason for keeping her name secret. Perhaps she has known you in former years, and in the present calamity has no other resource."

"Probably, although rather far-fetched," said the Major, annoyed. "And the consequence to me naturally did not occur to her. I am an officer, unmarried, and am, without preliminaries, promoted to the position of a married man. Perhaps my name has been used for a compromising swindle. That would be an infamous farce that would have to be stopped at once. I have no choice. I must go, if I can only obtain the necessary furlough soon enough."

"When I came here," said Captain Richter, "I saw the Colonel go into the barracks. You can stop there, secure the necessary permission, and catch the train leaving in an hour. Good luck to you."

Ten minutes later he was gone.

* * * *

The railway accident, which had taken place near a small station, had not been very serious; no lives were lost, but several of the passengers had been slightly injured. The two doctors of the town were soon on the spot, and while the younger looked after those that had been taken to an inn near by, Dr. Velden ordered Helen moved to his own house, as she still lay unconscious and appeared to be seriously injured.

In an ante-chamber adjoining the room in which Helen lay, Professor Roditz paced up and down in great excitement. He did not heed his own bruises—he only saw Helen's white face, her lifeless form, as she lay in his arms after the catastrophe.

What would the next hour bring? Was Helen—he thought of her only as Helen—seriously hurt, or would she be saved, and for whom? For a brutal, hateful man, without doubt, who would torment her with his jealousy and cruel neglect, as in the present instance.

The Professor, lost in consideration of the most unpleasant possibilities and probabilities, did not hear the door open. Only when a hand touched his arm, he started.

"Ah! It is you, doctor? How is our patient?"

His face expressed such anxiety that the doctor pressed his hand reassuringly, saying:

"Courage, there is no danger; not even a serious injury. The swoon was evidently caused by the shock and the loss of blood. The young lady is conscious, but I did not allow her to speak. I have given her a sedative which will give her the rest she so much needs. A wet compress has been placed on the wound on her head, and I am convinced that your *protégée* will be able to continue her journey in the morning."

"Thank Heaven, and thank you, doctor, for these good tidings," cried Professor Roditz, and so overwhelming a joy brightened his face, that the doctor answered surprised.

"Ah, is that the case? The young lady is your *fiancée?* Well, well, I congratulate you with all your heart. Your future wife is certainly charming."

She stretched out her hand repellently, and groaned: "Away, away, only take him away!"

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"You are mistaken, doctor, there are no such relations existing between us. I met the lady for the first time today. She is married, and I have telegraphed to her husband, Major Fritters, in Leipsic, who may arrive here by the next train."

"Fritters. What a comical name," laughed the doctor. "But I must confess I did not think an old practitioner like me could make such a mistake. I would have sworn she was a young girl. I must go now to look after the other patients, but shall be back before the arrival of the Major."

The doctor took his hat, and left the house grumbling.

"No relations—astonishing. Perhaps we shall have a most interesting scene when the husband arrives. For that this young man is head over ears in love with this young woman, a blind man can see!"

Professor Roditz, to regain his composure, took a long walk. He returned just in time to usher an officer into the room—so the Major had arrived.

Now he must control himself and observe closely. Bowing coldly, he stepped up to the Major:

"I have the honour of seeing Major Fritters?"

On the other hand, the Major did not look with any more friendliness upon the man who had summoned him here. With an ironical smile he said lightly: "Quite right—and I suppose you are Professor Roditz, who telegraphed for me?"

"Yes, I took the liberty, as I could not think what the doctor's verdict would be. Thank Heaven, there is no danger; but I do not doubt, Major, you will be happy to have your wife in your own care after this accident."

Without deigning to answer, the Major calmly turned to the doctor, asking him without the slightest emotion:

"So there is no danger? She is not unconscious, or through the shock—mentally unbalanced?"

"No, Major," said the doctor, annoyed at the unfeeling question. "Your wife has a wound on her head which has bled freely, but is not in the least dangerous, and will heal quickly. She lies asleep in the adjoining room, but may waken any moment. Then nothing will prevent your seeing her, only I should advise you to avoid excitement or the mention of domestic affairs."

"Whether my appearance will excite the patient I cannot tell, but of domestic affairs she will certainly not hear through me."

"Well," replied Doctor Velden, hotly, "if one has children, such communications are quite possible; I know that by experience."

The Major remained a moment speechless with astonishment.

"Children," the doctor had said. Things were constantly growing more complicated. Could it be possible that the stranger had confirmed this? At present he must remain perfectly passive, eventually the truth must come to light; in the meantime he would see her—his wife!

"And are you perfectly sure"—the Major turned again to the gentlemen—"that the lady is indeed Mrs. Fritters? Did she herself give this name?"

"Certainly," replied the Professor, aggravated at the ironical tone of the Major, who could not suppress a smile; and bowing courteously, said: "I am satisfied now, since the lady introduced herself as Mrs. Fritters. But now I should like to see her," he added cheerfully.

"As you please;" the doctor's voice sounded brusque, as he led the way into the adjoining room.

Helen had just awakened, as the doctor stepped quickly into the room.

"Here, madam, I bring your husband, who has come in answer to our telegram."

Until now Helen had only seen Dr. Velden, who bent over her.

"My husband! Oh, Heaven!" she whispered trembling, while the doctor beckoned to the Major to step forward. At the same moment Helen uttered a terrified cry, beside herself with fear and shame. She stretched out her hands repellently, and groaned: "Away, away, only take him away!"

Perplexed, the Major withdrew, not without a glance of warm sympathy at the pale young face. Such a wife he would not object to. For further consideration he had no time, as he was roughly drawn into the other room and confronted by the flashing eyes of Professor Roditz, while the doctor remained with Helen, trying his utmost to pacify her.

"Dear lady, you must not excite yourself. Your husband can at once return home if his presence worries you; besides, I will watch over you."

His comforting words, however, failed to quiet Helen. Her excitement only grew. She sobbed as if her heart would break, so that the doctor at last gave up his efforts.

Suddenly the door opened, and with the cry: "Helen, my poor Helen," a young girl hastened to the couch, knelt down, and took Helen into her arms.

"Emma, dearest Emma, now everything will come right." With these words Helen put her arms round her friend's neck, as if she would never let her go again.

"Poor Helen. Who would have thought that this pleasure trip would have such a tragic end? My uncle, the chief of the police, notified me of the accident, knowing you were on this train. I left at once, and heard at the station that you had only swooned, and were here under the care of Doctor Velden. And now I find you in this excitement. What does it mean? Are you injured? Are you suffering pain?" She raised her eyes to the doctor. "I am Emma Wahren, Helen's dearest friend, and beg you to tell me the whole truth."

"That is very simple," replied the doctor. "Your friend's condition leaves nothing to be desired. Now that you, her friend, have arrived, this unaccountable agitation at the appearance of her husband will subside, I hope. We naturally summoned him at once."

Now it was Emma's turn to stand aghast. She believed she had not heard aright; in greatest surprise she said: "What do you say? The husband of my friend? And you say he has arrived!"

"Indeed he has," growled the doctor, finally losing his patience. "Do you find it unnatural that we notified the husband of his wife's accident; and that he should come on at once? Professor Roditz assumed the responsibility of telegraphing for Major Fritters to Leipsic, who immediately came, as we expected him to. Why should this astonish you?"

Without answering, Emma inquired: "How did you know this name? Did my friend give it?"

"No, the Professor," was the doctor's impatient reply. "Besides, I must tell you that the whole affair seems to me more than unusual. Such a meeting between husband and wife, after one has just escaped death, is certainly not as it ought to be. It, of course, does not concern me," he added, turning to leave the room.

Emma and Helen looked into each other's eyes in silence; then the former with a roguish smile, addressed the doctor:

"May I ask you to leave me alone with my friend for a few moments? With all due respect to your knowledge, I believe in this case I shall prove the best doctor. You will see wonders."

She looked at him with such a bewitching smile that he pressed her hand. "Very well; I willingly leave the field to so pretty a colleague."

"One thing more, doctor; do not be too hard on the poor Major. You might regret it later and have to apologise," warned Emma, threateningly lifting her finger. "I shall

soon follow you; until then I beg you not to mention my arrival."

As soon as the door had closed the two friends fell into each other's arms, and, laughing and crying, Helen confessed everything that had occurred since morning—the trip, the interesting conversation, and—oh! the shameful falsehood, with its dreadful consequences.

"Save me, Emma," she closed her story. "You started the trouble, and now see that you send the Major away, and, above all, explain to Professor Roditz——" She turned aside in confusion. "Explain everything to him, as it would be unbearable to be misunderstood by him."

"Oh, oh!" laughed Emma, "you seem very much concerned about the Professor. Don't worry, I will explain everything, and take all the blame, which will be quite fair. But I am forgetting the embarrassing situation in which I am leaving the Major. What will the doctor and the Professor do to him? And I promised to come in a moment."

One kiss and she was gone. Helen drew a long breath and lay back on the couch, her eyes resting dreamily on the green foliage outside the window, while a happy smile overspread her face.

During the interview between Helen and Emma, an angry discussion had taken place between Professor Roditz and Major Fritters, and a challenge seemed imminent. In most violent terms the Professor had reproached the supposed husband for his want of feeling and heartless indifference towards his wife.

This was too much for the Major, although he knew that the Professor laboured under a mistake. He, too, lost his temper, for supposing things were as the others believed, what right had he to interfere in his domestic affairs?

His rough reply: "That does not concern you," only served to enrage the Professor still more. Fortunately, the entrance of the doctor and Emma put an end to this stormy interview. Roditz hastened towards her, and, grasping her hand, exclaimed: "Thank Heaven that you are here. Perhaps you will be able to influence the husband of your poor friend."

Emma laughed, and looked roguishly from one to the other. 'Professor—Major," she began, with two graceful courtesies, permit me to introduce the guardian angel as Emma Wahren, the most intimate friend of the pretty unfortunate, about whom you seem to have exchanged some unpleasant words."

"Pardon," hastily interrupted the Professor; "in this great excitement——"

"We forgot to introduce ourselves," finished the Major.

"That is unnecessary, as I just came from Helen, who mentioned your names. Yours"—turning to the Professor with mock gravity—"I have of course known for a long time; even so insignificant and prosaic a person as I am, know of the famous explorer. But your most poetic name," she continued, mischievously turning to the Major, "greets my ear to-day for the first time."

"For the first time?" interrupted the Professor, still very much excited; "do not torment me with a cruel joke."

"Cruel joke? I do not dream of such a cruel thing," replied Emma. "For although Helen is my friend, it does not follow that she is the wife of this much-abused man, who has endured so many trials to-day."

She smiled pleasantly to the Major, whose face had brightened. He bent over her hand and kissed it enthusiastically.

"I do not understand a word of all this," said Roditz, annoyed, "you are jesting, while I——"

"While you consider the Major a barbarous tyrant and me a foolish girl. But you will have to do penance, my dear Professor, for you must know," here she drew herself up, "Helen Elden, my friend is—unmarried."

"Unmarried?" exclaimed the Professor, with a radiant face, "unmarried!" For a few moments he remained speechless with emotion.

"But," he stammered at last, "how could Miss Elden deceive me so?"

"Hush, hush, Professor, do not judge her hastily, as you did the poor Major. Helen is innocent, and has suffered sufficiently through my careless joke. I shall presently, as the only guilty one, make full confession, but first make amends to your deplorable victim here."

The Professor advanced to the Major.

"Can you forgive me all that this wretched misunderstanding has led me to say?"

"Do not mention it," laughed the Major good-naturedly, "but I should really like to know——"

"So would I," said Doctor Velden. But as I have to go to the station now, I propose we all spend the evening here together. Then Miss Wahren must tell us everything most explicitly."

The doctor's proposition was accepted.

While Emma and the Major, with whom it seemed a case of love at first sight, entered into an animated conversation, Professor Roditz had slipped into the adjoining room, where Helen rested in an easy chair by the open window.

A slight noise made her look round. With a joyous cry she tried to rise, but the Professor knelt down by her side and gently pressed her back into the chair.

"Helen, Helen"—that was all his trembling lips could utter. A few moments later she lay in his arms.

A. A. Altroff.

Roditz hastened towards her, and grasping her hand, exclaimed: "Thank Heaven, you are here."

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A Rival in the Case.

"Hello, Fitzy! where did you get that black eye?" "Oh, it was only a lovers' quarrel." "Lovers' quarrel! Why, your girl did not give you that, did she?" "No, it was her other lover."

A Doubtful Compliment.

Over the shop door of a pork-butcher in a village in the eastern counties may be seen a signboard representing a man in a black coat brandishing a hatchet, with the inscription: "John Smith kills pigs like his father."

The Pickpocket's Trick.

A joyous damsel rushed into a citizen's arms at London Bridge, exclaiming: "Oh, you are my long-lost brother!" She soon discovered her mistake, and rushed off in a confused manner, accompanied by her long-lost brother's purse!

Still a Chance.

Young Mr. Billington: "Amy, my love, I wish we lived in the good old days, when a knight could fight for his lady-love." Miss Coolington: "Why, George, dear, as for that, you haven't asked papa's consent to our engagement yet, you know."

A Decided Advantage.

Furniture Dealer (to elderly spinster): "And there is another advantage, ma'am, which the folding-bed has over the ordinary kind." Elderly Spinster: "What is that, sir?" Furniture Dealer: "You don't have to look under it to see if there is a man there."

The Horse Didn't Know.

Nelly (sympathetically): "You poor dear! What a narrow escape! And what startled the horse?" Gussy (indignantly): "Well, you know, Will was just helping me out of the dog-cart, and—the stupid horse could not tell the difference between a good-night kiss and a signal to start. And he started. Some horses have so little sense."

Far too Risky.

"Well, Mr. Smythe, you've passed your examination very satisfactorily. But stay—what is your profession?" asked the insurance company man. "I am—er—er—a poet," said Smythe, blushing. "Oh, and do you take or send your poems?" "I usually call with them," said the rhymester. "In that case, Mr. Smythe," said the official, shutting his book with a snap, "we certainly shouldn't think of insuring your life! Good morning!"

He Wanted a Smoke.

Marie: "Why is Mr. Puffer in such a hurry to marry Maud?" Arthur: "He promised her he wouldn't smoke while they were engaged."

Quite Safe.

Doctor: "Your wife is very ill, sir, and likely to die." Husband: "You needn't worry about her, doctor. She got a new dress the other day, and she hasn't tried it on yet."

Practical Advice.

Domestic: "Plaze, mum, I'd like to hev a lookin'-glass in th' kitchen." Mistress (a practical housewife): "Keep this tinware well scoured, Mary, and you won't need one."

Could Do It Better Himself.

Mamma: "When that boy threw stones at you, why didn't you come and tell me instead of throwing them back?" Little Son: "Tell you! Why, you couldn't hit a barn door."

Only a Part Author.

"Yes, that's a capital article; I didn't think you had got it in you to write as well as that." "Well, I'm only what you may call part author." "Oh, is that so? What part are you responsible for?" "Well, the italics are mine."

Stood by Him.

Mrs. Prentice: "How do you always manage to have such delicious beef?" Mrs. Bywell: "I select a good honest butcher, and then stand by him." Mrs. Prentice: "You mean that you give him all your trade." Mrs. Bywell: "No, I mean that I stand by him while he is cutting off the meat."

Telephoning Made Easy.

Employer: "You are having a decided flirtation with the girl who has charge of our telephone wire." Truthful Clerk (with cold chills running up and down his spine, and with visions of instant discharge): "Y-e-e-s, sir; but please, sir——" Employer: "Well, keep it up. She will give more attention to our calls, if you do."

More Powerful than Orpheus.

"That is Orpheus," said the young man, "he was a wonderful musician. He was such a wonderful player as to move trees and stones." "Really?" replied the old gentleman, looking at the statue in a contemplative mood. "Not so bad; but you never heard that cousin of ours play. She's only a little puny thing, but they do say she's made no fewer than twenty whole families move, and I fancy it's no more'n the truth."

Value for Money.

I was travelling from Inverness to London, and my only companion in the third-class carriage was an elderly Highlander, who sat in the corner with his plaid wrapped round him, and an expression of supreme content on his countenance, only stirring occasionally for the purpose of taking a swig at his flask of mountain dew. Not a word was passed for some two hours, and then, tiring of the monotony, I ventured to suggest: "This is a fatiguing journey." "Ay, and so it ocht to be," was the reply. "Twa poun's twa shillin's, and saxpence."

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Amelia's Mother.

How a Girl's Chances of Marriage were Nearly Spoilt by her Mother.

AMELIA JOHNSON was a remarkably pretty and attractive girl. There could be no doubt of that.

Her nose, it is true, was distinctly *retroussé*, and her mouth might have been just a trifle large for beauty. But then, nobody ever dreamt of taking Amelia's nose, or her mouth, by itself, and proceeding to criticise it in cold blood. That would have been like taking a single weak line out of some clever book, and condemning the book on the merits of that line alone.

"No; it was the *tout ensemble* of Amelia that her admirers looked at—the nose and the mouth taken in combination with a pair of wonderful grey eyes, an exquisite complexion, two rows of pearly teeth, a trim little figure, and a ready tongue that seldom spoke ill of anyone.

A fresh, sweet, wholesome, healthy-minded girl, that is what Amelia was and looked like, and that is what invariably captivated her admirers until—until they met her mother.

Now, the sight of Amelia's mother had precisely the same effect upon all Amelia's admirers.

One by one they would pause—hesitate—and go away again, usually for ever.

It was noticeable that those who did not go away, but merely paused and hesitated, got no further with Amelia.

From the moment they beheld Amelia's mother, their admiration of the daughter seemed to pale perceptibly. They would grow inattentive and absent-minded. Their eyes would wander from the daughter's to the mother's face and back again in pained surprise, and the result was always the same. After more or less mature deliberation, they invariably came to the conclusion that they were unworthy of Amelia, and proceeded to bestow their attentions upon some other girl, not so pretty, nor so bright, nor so clever as Amelia, but—not with Amelia's mother.

Occasionally, one more outspoken than the rest would confide the reason of his conduct to his friends.

"She's too like her mother," he would remark, gloomily, and those who knew Amelia's mother understood and sympathised.

Now, it is quite possible that a pretty woman may bear a striking resemblance to a plain one. Yet men are slow to grasp this fact, and where a charming girl resembles her anything but charming mother, the charm of the former is apt to fade in men's eyes at sight of the latter.

Because the girl was like her mother, they argued that Amelia, at her mother's age, would be her mother's image.

Poor Amelia!

Mrs. Johnson, certainly, was not a pleasing object to look upon. But then, she had not had a pleasing life. Fate had been unkind to her, and Fate's unkindness is no beautifier.

In the first place, Mrs. Johnson's husband had always been a trial to her. He was not exactly a bad man. He never beat her, or starved her, but—he illtreated her all the same, for he habitually kept her short of money.

What other women did with twenty shillings, Mrs. Johnson had to do with nineteen.

What pitiful economies, and scraping, what unspeakable humiliation and anxiety Amelia's mother had to bear because of that odd shilling that was always missing!

Her married life had been one long struggle to make both ends meet. Is it to be wondered at if the wrinkles gathered thickly upon her brow, if the light faded from her eyes and the colour from her cheeks, and ugly, fretful lines drew down the corners of her mouth?

It is easy to preach Mark Tapley's philosophy, but far less easy to practise it. Poor Mrs. Johnson did neither. From the end of the honeymoon to the day on which Amelia's first admirer presented himself before her, she had muddled her dreary way through life as best she might, and, as the years went by, the hard lines in her face grew harder, angles appeared where nature had intended curves, and curves where straight lines should have been.

At first, her mirror told its tale with brutal frankness. She looked at herself, and became, first despondent, and then indifferent.

"I'm growing old and ugly before my time," she told herself.

She was never one to make the best of things. By almost imperceptible degrees she put off, one by one, all those innocent little vanities which every self-respecting woman loves.

She grew careless in her dress, and began to go about the house in slovenly, ill-fitting garments, "for the sake of comfort." It is a bad sign when a woman begins to talk of comfort as opposed to beauty.

"Anything is good enough to do housework in," she said, and in time she became so accustomed to the tattered, stained blue skirt and dingy blouse that formed her working-garb, that she ceased to notice the stains and tatters, and made no attempt to remedy either.

By and bye she came to accept her unlovely appearance as a matter of course, and presently the faculty for self-criticism deserted her altogether. As the years went by, she neglected herself more and more, until she came to be as her daughter's first admirer saw her.

Bob Amies had been wonderfully taken with Amelia, and before he had known her twenty-four hours, he had made up his mind to ask her to be his wife.

Then Mrs. Johnson appeared upon the scene, and Bob felt as though a hose had suddenly been turned on upon the flame of his affections.

Could this really be Amelia's mother, or was it some awful apparition of his distorted fancy?

He rubbed his eyes, half hoping to find he had been dreaming, but Amelia's mother did not fade away.

No; she continued to sit opposite to Bob, no mere vision of a nightmare, but a creature of flesh and blood, uncompromisingly real and plain, a horrid travesty upon Amelia.

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One by one he dug out, as it were, Amelia's features from the *débris* of Mrs. Johnson's face.

The nose he recognised at once. It was broader than Amelia's. But then, noses deteriorate with age. It required no great effort of Bob's imagination to picture Amelia's nose, in years to come, just such another as her mother's.

The mouth, too, was unmistakable, alas—Amelia's mouth without its sweetness and humour, without its rows of pearly teeth—ephemeral charms, as Bob acknowledged with a groan.

Then, there were the eyes, eyes of the same shape, the same colour. But would Amelia's ever look as dull and listless as her mother's, with their faded lashes, and their environment of crows' feet? Could it be that Mrs. Johnson's had once flashed with that joyous light that made Amelia's beautiful? Well, such things were possible. Amelia's eyes might, at her mother's age, be dull and listless too.

It had not struck Bob, until he saw Mrs. Johnson, how much Amelia owed to her complexion. He remembered now how few women over thirty have fine complexions. The chances, then, were that Amelia at forty would have an unhealthy-looking skin, just like her mother's.

And then, the wrinkles that disfigured Mrs. Johnson's face! Bob didn't know the secret of those distressing lines. There was no one to tell him that Amelia's mother had had more than the common share of sordid worries.

As Bob's eyes wandered over the uncomely lines of Mrs. Johnson's figure, he fancied he could trace therein the gradual deterioration of Amelia's girlish form. He did not see how much of that deterioration was owing to neglect, and how the slovenly gown she wore emphasised each ugly line.

He saw Amelia's mother as she was, and fancied he saw Amelia as she would be. Then, good-bye for ever to Amelia!

And what Bob Amies saw, they all saw, that long procession of admirers who came and went away again.

Amelia saw it too, and understood.

The disappearance of the suitors did not trouble her. She had cared for none of them—so far. It was the reason of their disappearance that enraged and grieved her. She felt—ashamed of her mother, and ashamed of being ashamed.

To the young men themselves she gave very little thought. She had never been in love—until John Marsden came.

The moment Amelia saw John, she knew that her fate was sealed, and the moment John saw Amelia, he knew that *his* fate was sealed.

"I shall marry that girl or die a bachelor," he said to himself, and began, forthwith, to lay siege to Amelia's heart.

Amelia made a brave show of resistance—as a matter of duty, for she had been well brought up. But John, nothing daunted, continued the siege, and, at the first sign of yielding on her part, he ventured to ask permission to call upon Amelia at her parents' house.

"I have never had the pleasure of meeting your father and mother," he remarked, unprepared for the effect his words would have upon Amelia.

The girl looked as frightened and distressed as though she had suddenly learnt some terrible news, and John waited, in some trepidation, for her answer.

"My mother will be pleased to see you," she said, at last, in a faint voice, and John puzzled his brains in vain to find some reason for the sudden change in her.

He would have been still more puzzled could he have seen the tears Amelia shed that night in her room.

"He will go away like the rest," she sobbed. "It's hard—very hard," and with the tears trickling down her pretty face, she stared at her own reflection in the glass, and wished she were not so like her mother, and hated herself for wishing it.

But John Marsden did not go away, like the rest. He stayed, and made friends with Mrs. Johnson, and came again, and one day he asked Amelia to be his wife.

He scarcely expected Amelia's answer.

"Think of me at forty-five!" she said, tremulously.

He looked into her face and saw that she was quite serious. But the words required some explanation.

Reluctantly, and with burning cheeks and eyes averted, she told him everything.

"You will think it hateful of me to speak like this of my own mother," she ended, "but I can't help it. I tried so hard not to see it, but I had to. I can't be blind, though perhaps I ought to be. It has always troubled me, and, since I have known you, it has made me wretched."

"Which means that I am the happiest fellow in the world!" cried John, taking her suddenly in his arms.

John was always quick to seize an advantage.

"You haven't answered my question yet," said Amelia, presently. Her voice now, for reasons which need not here be dwelt upon, sounded strangely muffled. "How is it you don't feel like the others? Don't you"—it was very hard to say it—"don't you disapprove of mother's looks, and—and——"

John became suddenly very serious.

"I'll be frank with you, dearest," he said. "I have the greatest respect for your mother, but not for her appearance. If I thought you would ever come to look like that——"

He drew a deep breath.

"That's what the others thought," whispered Amelia.

"But you never will," said John, eagerly. "I swear you never will. Shall I tell you why? It's because you won't lead your mother's life, you won't suffer as she is suffering, I won't let you, I won't allow——"

"Does my mother suffer?" interrupted Amelia, in an awed and startled voice. "What makes you say that? How do you know? She has never breathed a word to me."

"Forgive my saying so, dear," he replied, "but I believe I understand your mother better than you do. Has it never occurred to you that she lies awake, night after night, planning and contriving how to pay the butcher and the baker?"

"She never speaks of money matters to me," said Amelia, still in the same startled voice. "I never thought, I never guessed—oh, how do you know?"

"It is written in her face," said John, "and in her voice, in every look, and tone, and action. There are thousands of women like her, Amelia, women who've had a rough time all their lives, who've had the heart taken out of them by the miserable struggle to make both ends meet. Good heavens! And people expect women like that to be bright and amiable!"

The tears were running down Amelia's face.

"I—I'm beginning to see," she said. "How blind, and selfish I've been! Why couldn't I guess? Why couldn't I understand her as you do? Oh John, is it too late? Can't I help her now?"

"Of course you can," returned John, promptly, "but you'll require somebody else's assistance. Amelia, darling, are you prepared to make a tremendous sacrifice?"

"Anything in the world, John."

"Well, then," said John, slowly and impressively, "since want of money is at the bottom of all your mother's troubles, you'll have to marry money!"

Amelia uttered a little cry.

"You—you tell me to do this?" she gasped.

"It is the only way," replied John, with an unmoved face.

"In that case," returned Amelia, with biting sarcasm, "perhaps you will also be good enough to provide the necessary husband."

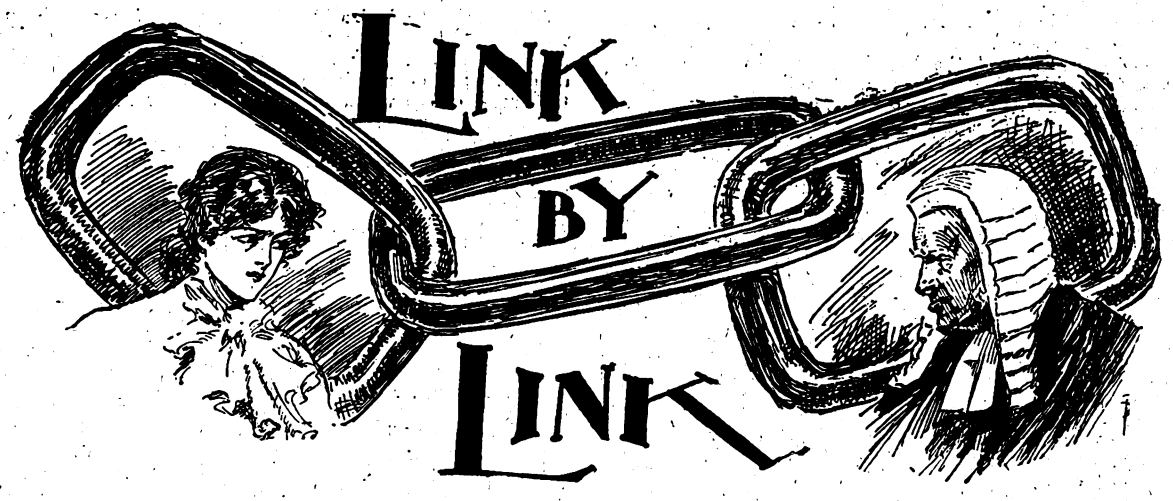
"I shall be pleased to do so," said John, with the same calm manner. "I've thought of someone who, I think, might suit you. He's got a very decent banking-account, and he's not a bad sort of chap. His name is already familiar to you."

"Indeed! Then may I inquire what it is?"

"John Marsden."

"Oh, John!"

Grete Hahn.



Principal Characters in the Story.

Gerald Mortimer: Of Moulstone Manor, in love with Nina Penhurst.

Mrs. Mortimer: Gerald's mother.

Dr. Branksome: Medical attendant at Moulstone asylum, a great friend of Gerald.

Anthony (or Felix) Cordelvin: An inmate of Moulstone asylum, who was found murdered.

Nina Penhurst: Governess at Moulstone Manor, a distant relative of Cordelvin.

Roderick Vanstone: Nina's guardian. He lives at Streatham, and has under his charge a man named Cordelvin, of weak intellect, whose estate, held in trust for Nina, he manages.

Stephen Vanstone: Roderick Vanstone's son.

The woman in the dark blue cloak: She was seen at Moulstone on the night of the murder, and has acted rather suspiciously since.

Stebbings and Burge: Men employed by Vanstone.

Inspector Trench: Of Scotland Yard, who is intrusted with the task of discovering the murderer of Cordelvin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Inside the Old House.

WHATEVER mysteries there were contained in that house; whatever clues to crimes at present undefined might be concealed therein, there was little to suggest either, in that long, oblong room known as the library. A couch, two or three comfortable arm-chairs and half-a-dozen ordinary chairs were dotted about; while turned anglewise, and half facing the big diamond-paned window was a dark oak desk, matching in colour the book-cases which lined the opposing wall.

Inspector Trench took the details in in a moment, and quickly resolved that little or nothing was to be gathered from their contemplation. Failing an examination of the interior of the desk, the officer felt that nothing he saw would advance him much on his voyage of discovery.

At the same time he was wondering what sort of an excuse he could invent to look over the house. Despite the invitation which Ned Stebbings had extended to them to rest in the library, the detective found himself still strongly of opinion that the man was telling a lie when he maintained that Mr. Vanstone had gone away. But, naturally, he could not betray this lack of faith in the man's word without creating suspicion; a thing he did not wish to do at present. Hence his quandary. Having secured an entry to the house so expeditiously, he did not wish to spoil his investigations by too precipitate action. That he was on a hot trail he felt convinced, but, after all, his beliefs were largely theories, unbacked by any convincing facts.

So while he sat there in the library with Nina Penhurst and Doctor Branksome, and racked his brains for an excuse to explore the house. For some time he could think of none, and was slowly coming to the decision that he would have to take a bold course, when, by a fortuitous circumstance, Stebbings once more entered the room and saved him all further trouble in the matter.

"Excuse me," remarked Stebbings, "but I've jest thought that as the lady's here, she mebbe 'ud like to look over the old place."

Inspector Trench glanced up in amazement. The strange anticipation of his intended request took him aback. There is as much ground for suspicion in a too ready confidence in a stranger as there is in a too reluctant, and this unexpected burst of ingenuousness, this sort of implied "we court inquiry" invitation had not entered into his calculations. Still, the opportunity seemed too good a one to miss, and he promptly answered for Nina.

"Yes, we were just discussing what a quaint, rambling old place the house is, and I am sure Miss Penhurst would like to renew her acquaintance with it."

"Then perhaps you'll kindly come with me." Stebbings answered, and forthwith led the way.

As with his companions the inspector followed the man from room to room, he gradually felt growing within him a sense of disappointment. Despite the odd, romantic look of the house, and the cloak of mystery with which, to the detective's mind, circumstances had enveloped it, nothing he encountered in that tour of inspection seemed to further him in his purpose.

Except that in several rooms the furniture was very sparse, it might have been the house of any well-to-do and perfectly respectable citizen. Nothing at all was there to arouse suspicion or to strengthen that which was already in existence.

In his own mind Trench was admitting that on this, his first visit to the old house, he had drawn a blank. Evidently what Stebbings had said about the absence of his master was too true, for there was no sign of him in the house. Every room had been visited, and there was no excuse for staying longer—nor any good to be gained by so doing.

The officer turned to Stebbings. "Thank you," he said, "for allowing us to look over the old place, it is very interesting. We are sorry Mr. Vanstone is away, but doubtless he will be back in a few days, and we will then do ourselves the honour of calling——"

The officer suddenly broke off in his speech. A scream, weird and long drawn out, had rung through the house and interrupted him. His face took upon it a look of surprised inquiry.

"What was that?" he asked, and glanced quickly at Stebbings. The latter's face had gone blood-red, and then

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turned ghastly white. His jaws moved convulsively, but he uttered no word.

"What was that?" the detective repeated more sternly.

Again Stebbings' jaws moved. "Nothing!" he replied with an attempt at self-control; "that is to say, somebody out in the road screaming, probably."

The detective eyed him with an eagle glance.

"Look here," he replied in a tone that echoed through the room in which they were standing. "That won't do. That scream came from somewhere in this house, and you know it. It was a woman—tell me where she is!"

For answer, Stebbings stepped back a yard, his face to his questioner, and his hand diving into his pocket. It was out in a second clutching a shining six-chambered revolver. But Inspector Trench was too quick for him. He had been in similar positions before, and instinct had told him what Stebbings was about to do. Without a moment's hesitation, therefore, he had dashed at the man, and almost as soon as the weapon appeared had knocked it out of his hand.

Then, with the perfect ease of practice he had thrown Stebbings on to his back, and with his knee on his chest had snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists in a trice.

"Doctor Branksome," he said quietly, "Fetch in a couple of my men to look after this fellow. I'll hold him till you return."

"Now then," he went on, when this order had been carried out. "I think we may go and investigate. That cry, if I heard aright, came from underneath somewhere. There are evidently cellars to this house."

As he spoke he led the way out into a passage, and walked towards the rear of the house. As he entered the kitchen there came a repetition of the cry which had aroused his attention.

"Where did that scream come from?" he demanded.

"From the basement, undoubtedly," Doctor Branksome answered.

"So I think, and there must be cellars underneath; but where the dickens is the entrance to them?" The detective was examining panels and throwing back rugs as he spoke, searching for some hidden door or trap. But try as he and the doctor might, they could find nothing of the kind.

"The entrance to the cellars is concealed," the detective murmured after a thorough search. "We shall have to get the man we have captured to tell us where it is."

But Stebbings was altogether too disinclined to fall in with this suggestion. Despite persistent questions he sullenly and doggedly maintained that there were no underground apartments that he knew of.

"Very well, then," observed Inspector Trench to the doctor, "We shall have to find the way ourselves. I'll find those cellars if I have to pull the house down to do it.

Then ensued a most rigorous search. Walls were tapped to test their solidity; carpets were dragged off the floors to see if by any chance they concealed anything in the nature of a trap door, but, as before, the search went unrewarded.

The inspector passed into a small room adjoining what was evidently the pantry.

There was scarcely any furniture in it. It looked indeed as if it had been used as a lumber room. Only against the opposite wall stood a large, long, oaken wardrobe. The detective eyed it casually for a moment, then a thought suddenly struck him.

"Doctor," he said, "doesn't it strike you as queer to find a handsome piece of furniture like that stowed away in a room like this?"

"Well, perhaps so——"

"It's locked too. I say, doctor, I should like to see behind it. It's more than big enough to hide a door, and by Jove, the narrow space behind it is boarded up, and see, here it's fixed to the wall. Now that looks suspicious."

"What do you suspect?"

"That the entrance to the cellars is behind this wardrobe. I feel certain of it. People don't screw furniture like this to the wall for nothing. Half a minute, there's a little vacant space at the top. Give me a hoist up. I may be able to see if there's a door behind. Thanks, that's right! I want to stand on your shoulders."

Standing as he had said, the officer struck a match and peered down behind the wardrobe. But his view was interrupted suddenly. For as he peered, there was a sound as of a light door being burst open, and a moment later the panels of the wardrobe flew forward, and from between them there leapt a man!

The unexpected occurrence startled Doctor Branksome. He moved suddenly where he stood, causing the detective standing on his shoulders to lose his balance. The latter, finding he must fall, put out a great effort and sprang forward and downward just as the man issued from the wardrobe. By a fortuitous circumstance the officer landed right on top of the man, bringing him to the ground like an ox, and sprawling himself on top of him. Quickly the officer recovered himself and rose to a kneeling position. The other man still lay prone upon the ground in a dazed condition, during which time Inspector Trench seized the opportunity of snapping a pair of handcuffs on his wrists. Presently the man turned a little and groaned, then slowly opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he inquired wonderingly.

"You're in custody!" the inspector replied laconically.

"The devil!" cried the man, looking up in alarm.

"No, merely plain Inspector Trench," the other replied, "the other gentleman you mention will have you later on, Mr. Burge."

* * * * *

"Well, as the game's up as far as I am concerned, I may as well help you all I can," observed Burge a few minutes later, for he it was.

"That's a wise course," remarked the detective. "It will save me a lot of trouble."

"And it'll help me, won't it?" Burge inquired anxiously.

"Yes, I suppose so," returned the officer, his manner not altogether free from contempt. "King's Evidence men always get off lightly."

"Well then, I'm a-goin' to help you. Here's my keys o' the cellars, Mr. Inspector, and the entrance is *through the wardrobe*.—You'll find that piece of furniture has had a piece taken out of its back; that was Roderick Vanstone's cute way of hidin' the door."

"Where is Mr. Vanstone?"

"Gone away—him and his son, both. They tumbled to the fact as somethin' was goin' to 'appen, and got clear off last night, leaving Stebbings and me to face the music. I owe Mr. Vanstone one for that, and I'll get as much of my own back by tellin' you all I know."

"Who is shut up in the cellar? Who was it that screamed?"

"Oh, that was a woman. I was down there on purpose to try and keep her quiet. But you'll get more than one surprise when you get down there."

"Come, then," replied the inspector, "you can show us the way."

Taking a lantern with them they passed through the wardrobe and the door which it concealed, and found themselves presently descending a short flight of stone steps. At the foot of these, running right and left, was a passage, along which at intervals could be discovered three or four doors, for all the world like cell doors in a prison corridor.

"Here is the first," Burge murmured to the inspector, "and that there is the key," pointing with his manacled hands to one on the bunch which he had handed over to the officer.

The officer took hold of the key, pushed it into the lock, and turned it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A Startling Statement.

THE cellar into which the detective, the doctor, and Burge stepped was in complete darkness, and for a moment they could see nothing. But the swinging rays from the lantern which the officer carried presently revealed an unexpected sight. Huddled up in a heap, face downwards on the cold, moist floor, lay a woman.

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"Hullo!" exclaimed the inspector, and stopped dead in astonishment. The sight of physical distress aroused Doctor Branksome immediately, and in an instant he was by the woman's side, his hand on her heart.

"Thank God, she's alive!" he murmured. "It's the woman we saw—Ruth Cordelvin. She's in a swoon, and, Good Heavens, what's this?"

He passed his hand over her head as he spoke and quickly withdrew it red with blood. "How did she come with this?" he asked sternly of Burge.

"I had to give her a tap on the head," Burge replied callously. "She would keep on screamin' the place down."

"It's fortunate for you she isn't dead, you cowardly brute!" the doctor returned hotly. "And then to leave her down here in an unconscious state."

"Well, I had to look after myself, you know," returned Burge, scarcely abashed.

"You won't have to trouble about that again for some time," broke in the inspector drily. "You'll be looked after by other people."

"Give me a hand, inspector," the doctor ordered. "We must get this woman out of this."

Even as he spoke there came a shout—a cry, half appeal, half frantic delight.

"Branksome, is that your voice? Come to me!"

"Good Heavens! I know that voice, surely. Inspector—"

There was no need to prompt the officer to action, for directly he realised that the shout came apparently from an adjoining cellar, he had sprung across and in a moment had the door leading into it open.

Holding the lantern aloft, he peered in. Used as he was to dramatic scenes in real life, the inspector started to see a man chained to the wall.

"Why, good gracious!" he called out, "if it isn't Mr. Gerald Mortimer."

"Yes, it's I!" the prisoner returned, "and right glad am I to see you. Can you manage to get these infernal manacles off?"

"In the tenth part of a jiffy," the officer responded, stepping back. "Now then, you Burge, which is the key to these bracelets?"

"The smallest on the bunch!"

In less time than it takes to tell, the detective had unlocked the handcuffs, and Gerald Mortimer stood there a free man.

"What can I say to thank you?" he began, but the inspector stopped him abruptly.

"Please don't say anything just now, I'm busy," he observed bluntly. "There's a lady out there unconscious, and," he added with a twinkle in his eye, "there's another young lady upstairs—who will be glad to see you again."

"A lady—who is it?"

"Miss Penhurst!"

"Nina—Miss Penhurst here?"

"You'll find her upstairs."

So absolutely selfish is a man in love, that Gerald simply flew out of the cellar and up the stairs without so much as speaking to, or even noticing his friend Doctor Branksome. Although he knew not where Nina was, he quickly found her, some subtle instinct guiding his steps.

"My darling!" he cried, with arms outstretched, and careless whether anybody heard or not.

Nina was near to fainting at his sudden appearance, but she recovered herself and returned his embrace, as oblivious of the outer world as he was.

For a few minutes neither could say anything, so burdened was each heart with feelings of joy and relief, but when the period of composure came, Gerald poured into Nina's tenderly sympathetic ear the story of his kidnapping and imprisonment.

Meanwhile Doctor Branksome had had Ruth Cordelvin carried on to a couch, where he skilfully attended to her wound on the head.

"She'll be all right now," he declared to the inspector after a time, "I've managed to restore consciousness, but now she's gone off to sleep. That will do her good."

"When she wakes it won't be a very cheerful awakening," remarked the detective.

A Popular Actress's Misfortune.

ALL London was startled a few weeks ago by the announcement of the retirement from the stage of a certain beautiful and popular actress. Many rumours were at once spread as to what led her to abandon the stage, but the truth has only just leaked out. The hot and unhealthy air of the theatre did not agree with her, and she began to suffer from skin disfigurement in the shape of serious eruptions and pimples. These became so bad that eventually she had to give up her important engagement and retire. This should serve to warn readers of the seriousness of skin eruptions. For all skin eruptions and diseases Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain remedy. The following case gives proof. Miss Bessie Denbury lives with her parents in Washford, Somerset. "For over three years," said Mrs. Denbury to a *Somerset County Express* reporter, "Bessie was dreadfully disfigured with an outbreak of pimples and skin blotches. First of all they appeared all over her face, and then quickly spread until her whole body was covered."

"Yes," interposed Bessie, whose bright sparkling eyes and clear complexion now denote perfect health, "I was so bad that I never liked to be seen in public. My face was completely disfigured, and my mouth drawn all on one side. The flesh was lumpy and discoloured. The pimples enlarged and burst like gatherings, causing fearful pain. More than once I have been in such agony that I have fainted away. Often I have been unable to hold myself up; so weak and sickly did I become. I had only a poor appetite, and felt disinclined to go in for exercise. It was an utterly wretched feeling that overwhelmed me." "We had medicine supplied from a chemist," broke in Mrs. Denbury, "but Bessie's ailment was so serious that he could not do her the least good. We tried various measures, which were equally unavailing; and the case had apparently grown hopeless, when our attention was drawn to the fact that BILE BEANS had been found extremely beneficial in like cases. Bessie sent for some, and was so relieved in general health by them that she obtained a larger supply. It was not very long before I noticed a remarkable improvement in her appearance. Little by little, the swellings and blotches became less; the gatherings healed; and to-day, so far from being troubled at all with pimples or any other disfigurements, her whole skin is absolutely clear. She also feels as different again in health and spirits, being able to eat and sleep well and take exercise like anyone of her age should."

Bile Beans for Biliousness which accomplished the above cure, are purely vegetable in composition, and their excellence has been so well proved that many eminent doctors are now prescribing them largely. They are a certain cure for Skin Disfigurement, Pimples, Blotches, Rashes, and all Blood Impurities, also for Congestion of the Liver, Headache, Neuralgia, Fainting Fits, Constipation, Piles, Anæmia, Attacks of Dizziness, Biliousness, Indigestion, Flatulence, Pains in the Chest, Loins or Back, Defective Secretion of Bile, Wasting Affections, Female Ailments, and of ailments having a common origin in impurity of the blood, a general congestion of the system, and loss of vital force. Obtainable from all Chemists or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine.

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"How do you mean?"

"I shall have to arrest her, you know."

"Oh, yes, of course. Events have moved so quickly that I had forgotten. Meantime she must be carefully looked after. How can I get a nurse for her?"

"I'll send a message round to the local police-station," returned Inspector Trench. "They're sure to know of some reliable woman."

Duly the temporary nurse—Mrs. South—came, and at once entered upon her duties.

After two or three hours Ruth Cordelvin awoke, and declaring herself to be feeling quite well, was allowed to get up. She was duly conducted to the room where the detective and doctor awaited her.

"Ah, good morning," greeted the former politely, "I trust you are feeling quite yourself again, Miss Cordelvin."

The woman blanched at the last words, and turned on the officer with a look of fury.

"Why do you call me that?" she demanded angrily, "My name is Miss Richardson."

"Excuse me, madam, I am referring to your real name.

The woman looked towards the door as if she would have made towards it. A flush came into her face now.

"Who are you to talk to me in this manner?" she asked.

"I am Detective Trench, of Scotland Yard, madam."

Once more she looked at the door, and now she did make a step in its direction.

"Good morning," she said, with an effort at self-control, "I am going, I have been long enough in this wicked house."

"Not so fast, please, madam," the officer observed, rising quickly and placing himself between the woman and the door, "I am sorry, but there is a little formality to go through. I have to inform you that I hold a warrant for your arrest."

At the words the woman staggered back, clutching a chair for support.

"My arrest!" she gasped, white now to the lips. "Why would you arrest me? I am not mad, I tell you."

"No one has said you are, madam, I think."

"Then why would you arrest me?"

"On the charge of being concerned in the murder of Felix Cordelvin, at Moulstone."

The woman looked up quickly at the officer; then transferred her glance to Dr. Branksome, and burst into a peal of hysterical laughter.

Both men regarded her in amazement. Waiting until her laughter had subsided, the inspector said:

"This is scarcely a matter for hilarity, madam."

"But you charge me with the murder of Felix Cordelvin?"

"With complicity in the murder—I do!"

"That is what made me laugh. How do you know that Felix Cordelvin is dead?"

"His body was discovered among the castle ruins. He is dead and buried."

Once more the woman laughed hysterically.

"Fools, fools, all of you!" she cried. "Yes, a body was found, I know, and because Felix Cordelvin had been missing from the asylum, you at once concluded that the dead body was his. Fools, fools! all of you!"

The inspector flushed. "Look here, madam," he remarked, "for some purpose of your own you are trifling with me. Come, I must do my duty and arrest you."

The look of hysterical levity which had been upon the woman's face vanished on the instant. She became grave at once as she uttered clearly and emphatically:

"I swear that the body which was discovered was not that of Felix Cordelvin!"

Inspector Trench and Dr. Branksome both leapt to their feet in amazement.

"You look incredulous," the woman said, "but what I tell you is the truth. Felix Cordelvin is my brother, and he is alive."

The detective had got over his first shock of astonishment.

"Madam," he said, "what you have said has taken me by surprise, but I am ready to listen further. If the dead body was not that of Felix Cordelvin, whose was it?"

She shrank back a little at the question.

"How should I know?" she retorted. "Ask Roderick Vanstone, he can tell you all."

"He has gone away; he will be arrested when we find him. But tell me what you know. If you are not guilty you can have nothing to hide."

"I am not guilty," she cried indignantly.

"Then why hesitate to tell me what you know?"

Ruth Cordelvin did not speak for a few moments. Then, with a deep sigh preparing her words, she spoke.

"You are an officer of the law," she said to the inspector, "and you"—turning to Dr. Branksome—"are a medical man, with special knowledge, as it happens, of mental diseases. Tell me, both of you, do you think I am mad?"

The question was a surprising one, and took both men aback for a moment. Then they both assured her that they thought her perfectly sane.

"But what has your question to do with the matter?" the inspector inquired. "I asked you why you hesitated to tell me what you know?"

"I hesitated because I feared—no, no, I cannot tell you at the moment. It is too long a story. To tell you what I know is to tell you of the whole of my, and my brother's, past life. It is all written down in my diary at home. You may read it."

"You say you have written down the things we want to know in your diary?"

"Yes; it is all there, locked up in my desk at home. If you will come back with me to my flat you shall see it to-day."

"Very well, we will go at once," the inspector said. Then, going to the door, he called out to one of his men. "Hanson, you remain here. The others have taken Stebbings and Burge to the lock-up, I suppose. If Mr. Mortimer should return tell him to come on to—ah! There's a ring at the bell, perhaps that is Mr. Mortimer."

It was, and a moment later Gerald appeared.

"You've seen to Miss Penhurst, sir?" the inspector interrogated.

"Yes, I've taken her to the Charing Cross Hotel, where she will wait, in case she is wanted, till I see her again."

"That's good!"

"Any new developments?"

"Yes," the inspector answered. "This woman has told the doctor and myself some rather startling things. We are just going to her flat to get further details. You'd better come along with us."

"I think it would be better for me to follow on separately," Gerald answered; "my two previous encounters with this lady have been somewhat peculiar. I'll come on in another cab."

Even as they thus arranged it, they were suddenly interrupted by the return of one of the inspector's men, who had gone off in charge of Burge.

"Hullo, Joyce!" remarked the inspector, noticing the flurried condition of the man; "anything wrong?"

"I've come with a message, sir. Burge says you're to be sure to search the end cellar."

"The end cellar?"

"Yes, sir. He forgot to tell you while he was here."

The inspector exchanged a quick glance with Gerald. Then he looked into the library, called the doctor, and once more descended the damp and gloomy stairs. That they were on the verge of some important discovery all were convinced. But what was it to be?

The inspector fitted the key in the lock and turned it. The door swung back and they entered. Upon the ground somebody sat with head covered, apparently asleep.

They darted over to him.

"Good Heavens!" cried Gerald, with a look at the face; "it's Anthony Cordelvin!"

Dr. Branksome started back in violent surprise. Then he bent forward to scrutinise the features of Cordelvin more closely, and from under his breath came the exclamation, dramatically and reverently uttered: "My God!"

The inspector looked up. "What's the matter?" he asked.

"Matter enough!" returned the doctor; "this man whom Mr. Mortimer calls Anthony Cordelvin, is really Felix Cordelvin, the man who escaped from Moulstone Asylum!"

(To be continued.)

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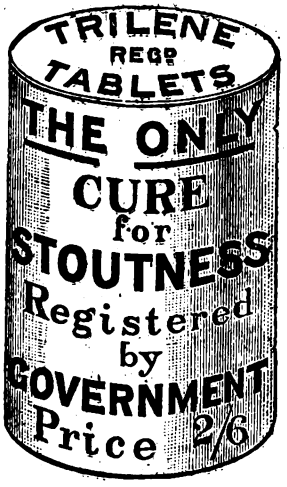

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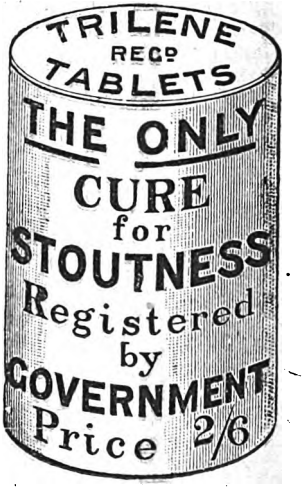

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 7st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 8lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 28. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Miss JANE CARTER, of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest value. I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 87 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 49lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case caused much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

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A SELF-SACRIFICING WIFE.

She always felt guilty that she should remain at home in comparative idleness while her husband was struggling and labouring all day long to support her in ease, and when the new carpet was brought to the house she hailed it as an opportunity to prove herself the helpmate a wife should be.

"I'll lay that carpet," she soliloquised, with a happy smile, "and won't Billy be pleased—poor fellow!"

She beamed with delight as she contemplated in thought the picture of Billy returning home that night with the unwelcome prospect of a hard evening's work laying the carpet, only to find it all done by his sweet little bride.

"Dear Billy," she murmured, as she dragged the carpet into place and knelt to her labour.

The first blow of the hammer knocked a big splinter off the wainscoting.

"Dear me," she exclaimed petulantly, "how very provoking."

She felt discouraged, but persevered.

"Poor Billy," she softly cooed.

The next blow but one, the hammer caught in her watch-chain, and broke the delicate affair into pieces.

"Pshaw!" she cried vehemently.

But there was no pausing now.

"Darling Billy."

The ninth blow descended upon her finger, The fifteenth tore a large hole in her dress.

Thus events followed rapidly for nearly two hours, when she discovered that the carpet was laid u. side down, and fainted.

Billy was summoned from the office post-haste, and found his wife prostrated and delirious.

"Poor Billy," she was moaning again and again.

Three doctors held a consultation over her that night, and the next day she was better. A week later she was convalescent. Billy sat by the bedside, and held her hand tenderly She was pale and wan, but very sweet, withal, amid the profusion of snowy fabric. For a long time she had said nothing, seemingly lost in thought.

"Billy!"

Her big eyes were resting upon him.

"Yes, dearest."

"Is there anything in all the world, Billy, so grandly heroic as the self-sacrificing love of a woman?"

Involuntarily Billy's mind dwelt for an instant upon the battered wainscoting, the broken watch-chain, the torn curtain, the ruined carpet, the doctor's bills, and he calculated with marvellous rapidity that he would be lucky if he escaped for less than £20.

"No," he cordially rejoined, "I don't think there is anything quite like it."

A faint smile played about her pale lips. For a long time she pondered. At length her look grew suddenly serious, and again her eyes rested upon the form by the bedside.

"Billy."

"Yes, dearest."

"Don't think that I blame you at all, Billy, because I don't."

Presently she fell asleep. The sigh that escaped from Billy's lips was a little one, but it was very eloquent and comprehensive.

OUR NEW STORY...

In "SHORT STORIES" dated May 17th will appear the opening chapters of a powerful new romance entitled

"Thy Will be Done."

from the pen of Mr. Henry Farmer, the gifted author of "Fettered Lives" and "As a Man Sows."

This story will equal any work that Mr. Farmer has ever done, and will hold the reader entranced from the very first chapter. It is full of dramatic situations and of human interest. No story so powerful has ever before appeared in "SHORT STORIES."

The demand for this particular issue will be so great that, unless you place an order with your newsagent at once, the chances are you will be unable to get a copy at all.

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If your age now is		you will receive more than	
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"	20	"	£5,000
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WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

In the May "ROYAL MAGAZINE" you will find twelve pictures. Each of these pictures consists of a certain number of objects. These objects, either singly or collectively, represent the name of a town or place in the United Kingdom.

What you have to do is to find the town or place with the longest name entirely from the names of objects depicted in the pictures (or from their phonetic equivalents).

The Prize of 5s. a Day for Life

will be given to the competitor from whom the Editor of the "ROYAL MAGAZINE" receives a set of pages containing the greatest number of correct solutions.

The sum of £100 will be divided, at the discretion of the Editor, amongst those who come next.

All the names depicted in the sketches will be found printed in the list of Provincial Post Offices in the Post Office Guide, which may be consulted at any Post Office, or may be purchased for 6d.

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In Confidence

Conducted by

MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

Should He Tell the Girl?

"W. R." has a girl friend who is receiving attentions from a man who, he has reason to believe, is given to drinking, though he poses in her presence as an abstainer. Ought "W. R." to break the news to her? If so, how can he avoid being thought a story-teller?—The fact that the man "drinks" ought not to be thought too much of, unless "W. R." believes he is given to it in excess. If he believes the latter, then he should convey it to the girl by a series of hints.

First he should let her know something of the terrors wrought in domestic life through drink. He need go no further than the daily paper to see this. He should then warn her never to become attached to a man who is given to the practice in excess, and might hint that not all those who represented themselves as abstainers were free from suspicions in that direction. She could then form her own conclusions and act as she thought best.

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Wants to Write Novels.

So, "M. A. C.," you would know the technical part of novel writing, and have a taste for writing stories, but find you cannot begin them properly nor avoid getting muddled up. Well, I am only too pleased to tell you anything you may wish to know, though don't think the paths of even a clever novelist are strewn with roses. Of all professions, that of a writer is the most unsatisfactory, so do not lightly think you will easily be able to make it a source of income.

❦❦❦

But if you really have original ideas, there is no reason why you should not develop them. Try to open your story with a sentence which will at once interest a reader by suggesting a mystery or complication which he or she will wish to probe. Try to give your reader a clear grasp of each character as you introduce them without all sorts of unnecessary description. Make them talk as men and women, not as leader writers. And, for early practice, just pick out an old story from a magazine, and try and rewrite it, bringing in the same ideas, and compare your text with that of the author. When next reading *Short Stories* you should carefully observe how each author develops his plot, and model your own style as much on his as possible, till you are clever enough to strike a line of your own.

❦❦❦

Compound Introductions.

Lambert and his young lady, Amy, went to call on Lambert's friend Jack and his wife the other day. Amy did not know her sweetheart's friend, nor his wife, while Lambert himself had no the honour of knowing Mrs. Jack. How should the task of introducing the unknown parties be conducted?—After greeting Jack, Lambert should say to him, "Let me introduce you to my friend Miss Amy." Jack would then greet her and say to his wife, "Let me introduce my friends Miss Amy, and Mr. Lambert," which he would do separately, and the matter would be in order.

❦❦❦

Elementary Small Talk.

"Jupiter" is a much invited out young man, of a certain amount of originality, which suffers a terrible amount of straining when called upon to open conversation with ladies to whom he has just been introduced. He finds himself absolutely at a loss to open the conversation satisfactorily, and is tired of repeating the old common places of dances and parties generally. He asks me if I can give him a hint or two as to how to be able to avoid these, and yet not come to be regarded as an unsociable dolt.

❦❦❦

I sympathise with you, "Jupiter." The average conversation, nowadays, at dances and other gatherings, wants very serious reform. I know a young man who is really quite clever, but for years he got the reputation of being a fool, solely because he could not descend to the inanities of drawing-room chatter, and preferred to keep silence. Then light dawned upon him, and he reformed his conversational powers with extraordinary success. Thinking it better to be thought a conspicuous fool than an insignificant one, he invariably started his talk by making a statement which puzzled his partner. On one occasion, at an evening at home, when people were sitting round the room in an absurd semi-circle, he remarked that "the floor was good, wasn't it?"

❦❦❦

Seeing that the floor was carpeted, and not particularly well, his partner wondered what he was driving at and asked him. "Oh, I beg your pardon," he replied "I thought we were at a dance. I should have said that 'we were having excellent weather,' or something of the kind. One has to, you know." The girl laughed, and, though thinking him a little mad, soon begun chatting with him, till both developed an intimacy extraordinary to behold. I advise "Jupiter" to try something of the kind.

Can She Sue the Sweep?

"Vindictive" was making marmalade when a huge lump of soot came down the chimney into her pan and spoilt fourteen pounds of marmalade; she had had the chimney swept two days previously, and wants my advice as to whether she can sue the sweep and recover the amount of the damage.———I am afraid it would cost more than the marmalade was worth, "Vindictive." You can make the very best at the rate of twopence per pound, so you see your loss only amounted to two shillings and fourpence all told. Cheer up, and make some more.

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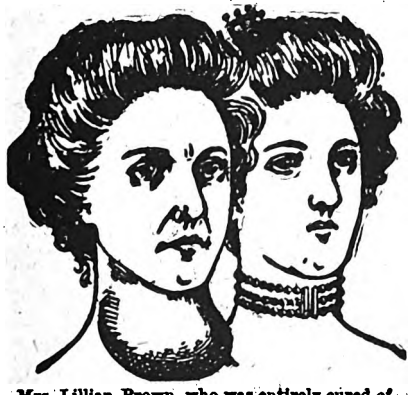

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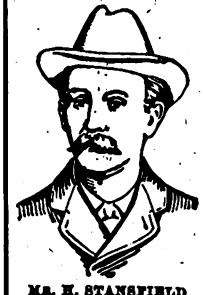

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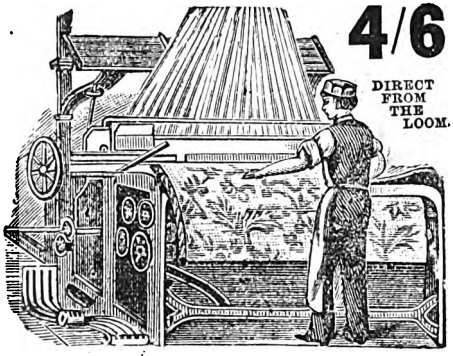

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THE EDITOR.

THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Stories by R. NORMAN SILVER.

THE PERFUME IN THE CUT-GLASS BOTTLE.

CHAPTER I.

A Problem is Stated.

"THE Superintendent, sir."

Lucius Shand checked the lithe arms that were swinging rhythmically about his head a pair of Indian clubs. His coat and vest had been thrown off, and he stood in the middle of his private room, his throat bare, his shirt-sleeves loose, and a bead or two of perspiration on his brow.

"Well?" said the surgeon, looking inquiringly at his assistant, "let him come through, I suppose he's in a hurry, as usual."

The other assented, and opened to its fullest extent the door by which he had just entered to make his announcement.

"Dr. Shand is disengaged, sir," he observed, raising his voice that it might penetrate to the small ante-chamber.

"Good!" was the cheerful response, and a stout, broad-chested man in a semi-military dress waddled rather than walked across the threshold. As the door closed behind his visitor, Lucius Shand flung his heavy boxwood instruments into a corner, and shook that person's hand.

"Sit down, sit down!" he urged, hospitably, "you don't grow any thinner, my dear Quiggan. I am fighting a tendency to corpulence, combined with a suspicious flabbiness of muscle. My prescription is a couple of bouts daily with the clubs."

He began to resume his garments as the Superintendent of Division B sank ponderously into a chair. Despite Lucius Shand's confession, there was nothing about his quick, elastic movements to suggest that he was in the least degree out of condition.

"You don't often get this far," he pursued. "What's in the wind now—something you'd prefer not to trust to the walls of your office at the divisional station? Or is it just a friendly call?"

Divisional Superintendent Quiggan blew his nose diplomatically.

"I—I happened to be in the neighbourhood," he answered, with slow self-possession, "and there *is* a little matter, doctor, on which your opinion—your private opinion, as well as your professional one—would be welcome."

"My dear Superintendent," said the surgeon, sticking into a black silk tie, a pin with an exquisite cameo of Cupid and Psyche, "so long as I can do, single-handed, the work of an intelligent but unlucky police-force, you may count on me. But if I don't get an elegant subscription tombstone when I do sink under the responsibility, I'll come back and haunt every beat in the division. What is it this time—another murder without a clue?"

"Not quite that," replied the Superintendent, blushing hotly under his companion's banter, "burglary with violence—to be exact, presumably burglary with violence. The case is a tangle and seems, on the whole, a bit fishy, but it's a high-class case all the same. You know Arden House?"

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"H'm!" murmured Lucius Shand; "I think I recollect it. A large, irregular mansion, with double verandahs, in a little park, on the very fringe of the division. Lady A. has a daughter and a niece—one fair, the other a dashing brunette — locally famous as the 'beautiful Miss Ardens.'"

Mr. Quiggan nodded. "That is the place," he said. "Well, at two this morning the constable on that particular beat was called by a frightened servant to Arden House. A scream from the direction of Miss Hilary Arden's room (Miss Hilary is Lady A.'s own daughter) had wakened everybody, and her maid had got there to find Miss Hilary ostensibly unconscious on the floor. The French windows leading from her apartment to the upper verandah were ajar, on the carpet was Miss Arden's jewel-case, with its contents scattered round it. Miss Arden's hands were bruised as if by blows, and her forehead also was bruised and bleeding. It was some time, apparently, before she came to."

The surgeon smiled. "You don't disguise your theory, Superintendent," he commented; "I conclude from your 'ostensibly' and 'apparently' that you think this Miss Hilary Arden was shamming."

Superintendent Quiggan spread out a pair of fat palms. "It's a probability," he admitted; "any proper burglar would have nipped off with the jewel-case and rifled it at his leisure. Why, the key was actually in the lock—it hadn't even been forced!—and there were a thousand pounds' worth of jewellery lying on the carpet, bracelets and rings and necklaces and similar trifles."

"What is Miss Arden's version of the affair?" queried Lucius Shand.

"Not very convincing," was the reply, "she alleges that she woke and saw someone at her jewel-box—she never sleeps in the dark, by the way. She sprang up to save it, and was struck on the hands and the forehead as she tried to grasp it. Asked what the person was like, she merely burst into tears and stammered something about having been so excited and not being able to say."

Mr. Quiggan put his plump fingers on his knees and peered into the divisional surgeon's face.

"Now, is that just fishy?" he demanded, "or could shock have upset her memory in patches, leaving her clear as to what occurred, and not as to the appearance of the man himself?"

"Where the human, and particularly the feminine brain is concerned," retorted Lucius Shand, "everything is possible. But I can give no practical verdict unless I see the patient, which should be without delay."

"It shall be immediately," agreed Mr. Quiggan; "my notion of the affair is that there's a plant somewhere, and I don't want the force to look ridiculous."

He rose with difficulty and put on his peaked cap. Late as was the afternoon, the summer day had been oppressive, and the Superintendent was a very Falstaff among police officials.

"The only possible suggestion of burglary," he continued, as if struck by an after-thought, "was a knife which was found on the verandah outside the open window, and which from its gapped edge might have been used to manipulate the catch of the upright casement. But Lady Arden's cook recognised it as one of her kitchen knives, so that actually proves nothing, though, of course, a servant may have had the idea of getting in through the window, borrowing Miss Arden's keys while she slept, and stealing a few trinkets that would not be easily traced."

Lucius Shand bent his head by way of admitting the plausibility of Mr. Quiggan's sudden theory.

"However, our taking the burglary allegation at all seriously," concluded the Superintendent, "depends on your view of Miss Arden's condition. I went up there about noon and overhauled the entire case. And really, doctor, when that charming young lady—for she is charming and as pretty as a picture—told me that she couldn't remember what this mysterious burglar was like, I had to smile."

Mr. Quiggan removed his cap and flourished it indignantly.

"'Was he tall, or short?' I said," declared the Superintendent. "'Had he a beard or a moustache. Was he thin or thick-set?—Surely you can give us some notion?'. But she just cried and said it had been all too terrible and she couldn't tell me any more. A kind of instinct seemed to whisper to me, 'Quiggan, you're being had—this is not what it looks; that dear little girl is stuffing you, for reasons of her own.' And so," ended the chief of Division B., sententiously; "I'm here."

The surgeon reached his square-crowned hat from the rack. "And the sooner we are at Arden House," he said, "the better."

Mr. Quiggan put himself heavily in motion, and they passed out together to get into a cab and be whirled away towards a distant and almost rural part of the division. The summer evening was closing down as they neared their destination.

CHAPTER II.

The Problem Becomes Complex.

"Good evening, my lady, this is an official colleague of mine. I should like him to have a word with Miss Hilary Arden, and then look over the room that was—that was entered last night."

The Superintendent bowed low before the middle-aged yet handsome woman he had just addressed. White-haired, proud, affable, she was a familiar type of English dowager. Her attire showed that the hour was already verging towards that of dinner.

"I—I fear you are attaching too much importance to the incident, Mr.—Mr. Quiggan," she said nervously. "Hilary is being made more unwell by the fuss than by her own unfortunate experience. However, my nephew, Lieutenant Ogilvie, who is visiting us, reached here this afternoon, and as men are more fitted to deal with such matters than women I will leave the affair between him and you."

Mr. Quiggan made a respectful sign of agreement. "Quite so, my lady," he replied, "but I trust there will be no difficulty about our seeing Miss Arden for a moment—this gentleman's view of her injuries may be of great importance."

Lady Arden was impressed by the Superintendent's seriousness. "Very well," she answered, "Mr. Ogilvie, I believe, is dressing for dinner, I will send him a message and bring my daughter to you myself. You will excuse me, no doubt."

With this explanation she left them alone in the room to which they had been ushered on their arrival. It was a spacious, old-fashioned library, with nothing modern about it except the nickel-and-walnut of a neat telephone on the large pedestal desk near the ample hearth.

The Superintendent had strolled to the neighbourhood of the carved mantel. He took up a photograph—a photograph of two young and lovely women in riding costume.

"This is Miss Hilary Arden," he observed, pointing to one of the portraits, "the other is her cousin Claudia. No wonder they are called the 'beautiful Miss Ardens!' Odd, isn't it, neither of them has ever married? They 'came out' more than three years ago."

Lucius Shand glanced at the photo and nodded abstractedly; he was thinking. Mr. Quiggan perceived the fact, put back the "cabinet," and relapsed into a silence that was only interrupted by the return of Lady Arden. With her was a slight yet graceful girl, grey-eyed, golden-locked, pathetically nervous. The latter's cheeks were blanched, and she walked

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unsteadily. The divisional surgeon hastened to place a chair for her, and paused beside it. Ill though she looked, she had dressed for the evening and bore herself with a certain courage.

"You have had a painful shock, I know," said Lucius Shand; "be reassured—I will not trouble you more than I can help. But I am a doctor—may I see this wound you sustained?"

The girl's lips quivered and she seemed about to speak. Instead, she raised a hand to her forehead and brushed back the drooping yellow curls, revealing a bruise both large and severe. It was, indeed, more than a bruise, being scored with several small, incised gashes that had evidently bled. Other marks of the same character, but less severe, were conspicuous on her hands.

"Has your head ached at all since that was done?" queried the surgeon gently.

Hilary Arden sighed, and murmured an affirmative.

Lucius Shand stooped over the fair locks; in all his wide experience he had never seen such a wound.

"What was it you were struck with?" he pursued. The girl looked up at him in sudden alarm, then covered her face.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she sobbed. "I can't bear to think of it. And I can't tell you any more—I can't, really." Her voice was broken, and the surgeon noticed that she shivered strangely. Lady Arden clasped her daughter in her arms.

"I cannot allow her to be excited any further," she said resolutely; "her nerves are not in a fit state. If this gentleman is a doctor he will recognise that."

"You are quite right, madam," owned the surgeon, "and Miss Arden shall not be worried with any more questions—especially as I now know all that I want to."

He laid a marked emphasis on the words, and again Hilary Arden glanced up at him. Lucius Shand affected not to observe the glance; he had turned to his companion.

"Pending our interview with Mr. Ogilvie," he said casually, "I should like to do as you suggested, Superintendent, and visit the scene of the attack. No doubt it is rather out of my province, but——"

Mr. Quiggan accepted the hint, and with a bow to Lady Arden and her charge, led the divisional surgeon out of the library and into the upper regions of the house. At the threshold of a pleasant boudoir on the first floor he stopped and entered.

"This is Miss Hilary Arden's room," he said.

Lucius Shand passed into the apartment, walked across a velvety Persian carpet, and ran his eye over a rosewood toilet-table with side and central mirrors.

At length he put out a hand, caught up a heavy ornamental bottle, twisted out the stopper and sniffed at the contents. The Superintendent gazed at him in stupefaction. The surgeon stuck the open bottle beneath his colleague's nose.

"Ever smell that perfume before?" he asked. Mr. Quiggan drew a critical breath, another and another, but finally answered in the negative.

"Nor I," said Lucius Shand; "however, the point is that Miss Hilary Arden's golden locks are fragrant with it, and that she has been struck on the brow from above with just such a surface as that furnished by the cut-glass facets of this bottle."

He took the flask by the neck and poised it. It afforded a massive, dangerous weapon; the phial was almost solid. As he tilted it the stopper slipped out and fell to the floor. But a few drops of fluid came with it—the bottle was almost empty. Lucius Shand stooped to pick up and replaced the stopper.

"That is why Miss Hilary's hair is loaded with this perfume," he remarked drily; "the bottle practically emptied itself on her head as it was lifted from the blow that left the bruise upon her temple."

"Then there was a burglary after all," faltered the Super-

He went on his knees and sniffed the carpet of the corridor.

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intendent. The surgeon laughed outright, and setting the bottle on the toilet-table, moved towards the door.

"Let us go and see the Lieutenant," he suggested, and stepped out into the corridor. An abrupt rustle of silk reached his ear, and he looked over his shoulder. The dainty ruchings and flounces of a pink dinner-dress were vanishing round a corner of the passage. The surgeon stole to the angle and peeped past it. A latch clicked and the low jar of a closing door followed. But Lucius Shand had caught a glimpse of the retreating figure—it was that of a woman, a striking, imperious brunette, the other of the "beautiful Miss Ardens."

The surgeon pressed onward along the corridor, seized by an overwhelming curiosity. All at once he halted and inhaled sharply the atmosphere of the place. Slowly he raised his fingers to his nostrils and sniffed at them; they bore the odour of the peculiar perfume he had offered for the Superintendent's criticism, yet the degree of the odour was very small. Lucius Shand filled his lungs thoughtfully.

An idea seized him; he went on his knees and sniffed at the carpet of the corridor; it was redolent of the singular scent.

"What the dickens are you doing, doctor?" demanded an astonished voice. It was the Superintendent himself, and he was staring at his crouching colleague.

The divisional surgeon rose. "Envying the bloodhound his nose, my dear Quiggan," he said calmly; "and now for Lieutenant Ogilvie."

He brushed the fluff of the carpet from his garments and, taking the Superintendent's arm, marched him back to the library.

CHAPTER III.

The Problem is Solved.

"My nephew, Lieutenant Ogilvie. Roland, this is Mr. Quiggan, the Superintendent of Police for the division, and, I understand, a doctor, also connected with the police."

Lucius Shand assented. Lieutenant Ogilvie, a bearded, frankly youthful Naval man, acknowledged Lady Arden's introductions in an embarrassed fashion. They had been awaiting the arrival of the surgeon and his colleague. Lucius Shand noticed that Hilary Arden had not withdrawn and that the lieutenant had been hanging over the back of her chair, soothing her in an unmistakably lover-like fashion.

"My aunt," said Roland Ogilvie nervously, "is much obliged to you, gentlemen, for the trouble you are putting yourselves to; but as no great harm has been—that is, as Miss Arden's jewels are intact—we should be glad to avoid any further publicity in this matter."

The Superintendent raised his eyebrows, then knitted them. "It is our duty to follow up the matter, Mr. Ogilvie; burglary, even without robbery, is a crime."

Lucius Shand twisted his long red moustaches with a malicious air.

"Supposing, Mr. Superintendent," he remarked, "that no burglarious entry were ever made—it is a question whether a resident at Arden House could be said to enter it burglariously. The charge in the case would be reduced to one of assault, and if no prosecution were made the whole affair would collapse. To do Miss Arden justice, she did not send for the constable, some frightened member of the servants' staff seems to have done that."

Hilary Arden drew a sharp breath that was distinctly heard in the silence of the room. She had put her hands on the arms of her chair and was gazing at the divisional surgeon.

"Miss Arden's boudoir," went on Lucius Shand, "was of course entered through the window from the upper verandah. But the visitor was not a burglar. A burglar would have had some weapon of his own with which he could have menaced or attacked Miss Arden, instead of using, as was done, one of the heavy cut-glass bottles from the toilet-table."

Hilary Arden sank back, white and gasping; her grey, dilated pupils were fixed on the surgeon's face.

"A charge of theft might be preferred or not, as Miss Arden wishes, in respect of the matters wrested by force from her bruised hands," proceeded Lucius Shand calmly, "yet that, again, is a point for private consideration."

"But—but, Dr. Shand!" began the Superintendent of the B Division, amazed. Roland Ogilvie interrupted him.

"Are you Dr. Shand?" he exclaimed, turning to the surgeon. "Dr. Lucius Shand, brother of Fleet-Surgeon Shand, now on the China station?"

"The same," responded Lucius Shand gravely. Roland Ogilvie held out his hand.

"I am delighted to meet you," he cried; "your brother is a great friend of mine, and I have heard no end of you and your doings. Not that I expected to get such a personal illustration of your abilities. But, by Jove, you've fairly cornered us and we must just throw ourselves on your good offices with the Superintendent. If possible, publicity must be avoided. The truth is——"

"Roland! Roland!" pleaded Lady Arden. "Is this wise?" Her nephew shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't know as much of Dr. Shand as I do, aunt," she was told, "or you would know that he can—that he must be trusted. Dr. Shand, the culprit is this affair is my cousin, Claudia Arden. She is a strange, wild, passionate creature, and she wished to peruse certain letters written by—by——" The young Naval officer paused to blush.

"By me," he said, "to my other cousin Hilary here—at Arden House we are a perfect nest of cousins. I had charged Hilary with a very difficult and even dangerous mission, involving the honour of a person in whom we were both interested. My letters were in that jewel-case. Claudia had, no doubt, noticed that Hilary was receiving envelopes in my writing, of which no family mention was made—and—and conceived a particular view of the fact."

"You mean," interpreted Lucius Shand, bluntly, "that she became jealous and therefore unscrupulous. Gaining access to her cousin's room, she was investigating the contents of the letters, when Miss Hilary woke."

"You are right," said the Lieutenant. "Finding that the letters contained the compromising details to which I have referred, she retained them—by force. As you have seen, after the police had been called in by one of the servants, Hilary did her best to screen our unhappy cousin." He laid an affectionate hand on Hilary's shoulder as he spoke.

"And the—the dangerous letters," asked the surgeon; "they are still in Miss Claudia Arden's possession?"

"Unfortunately yes," rejoined Roland Ogilvie; "she pretends not to understand our appeals and evidently depends upon Hilary to screen her in spite of everything."

"And upon the contents of the letters to support her against any threatened attack," said Lucius Shand.

"Alas, that is so, Dr. Shand," answered Lady Arden, despairingly. The surgeon's mouth set—he crossed the room and laid a thumb and finger upon the handle of the telephone-bell.

"Then I will trouble you to send for Miss Claudia Arden," he responded; "Lady Arden, Miss Hilary, Lieutenant Ogilvie, do not be alarmed. I will but cut this young lady's claws. Do not take me too seriously."

Surprised yet impressed by his manner, Lady Arden rang and ordered a servant to request her niece's presence. A moment elapsed in silence and then there swept in the tall and

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A scream broke from Claudia Arden's lips as she flung out her arms protestingly.

striking figure that Lucius Shand had seen in the corridor upstairs. She looked round coldly with a pair of piercing dark eyes, yet when she noticed the Superintendent's official uniform she paled slightly.

"Miss Arden," said the divisional surgeon; "you have certain letters pilfered from your cousin, Miss Hilary Arden, in the small hours of this morning and retained by force. You will give them to Lieutenant Ogilvie at once."

A flash, as of lightning, gleamed from Claudia Arden's eyes. "You talk in riddles," she retorted; "I know nothing of any such letters. What—" and she paused significantly over the question, "were their nature and contents?"

Roland Ogilvie made an uncontrollable movement, as though to check both the inquiry and any possible answer. Lucius Shand ignored the query and the motion. He bent to the telephone, rang the bell, and put the receiver to his ear.

"Number thirty-six, Exchange," he said, and waited. No one spoke in the library. Hilary had seized the Lieutenant's hand and hid her face. "That the Central Police?" went on the surgeon; "thank you—put me through to the Chief Inspector's office." He waited again. "Ah, good evening, Inspector," he said, after an instant's interval; "Dr. Shand is speaking; will you send up a couple of constables and a a female searcher immediately in a cab to——"

A scream broke from Claudia Arden's lips and she flung out her arms protestingly. "Don't, don't!" she gasped; "you shall have them, only not that, I couldn't stand it."

With a rapid gesture, she thrust her hand into the corsage of her dinner-gown, took out a packet of letters and threw them on the floor.

Lucius Shand stepped aside—a long forefinger resting on the hook of the telephone receiver and pressing it down; not a word of what he had said had been allowed to pass over the wire.

"But you shall know what is in the letters," cried Claudia Arden; "I will tell you that much and shame my aunt and her precious Hilary. What has Miss Hilary been doing but getting back forged bills—bills forged by——"

The surgeon interrupted: "Superintendent," he observed, "I think that there may be a charge to take, after all, against this—this person. A charge of attempted murder, now——!" and he brushed the curls from Hilary Arden's forehead to show the ugly bruise made by the cut-glass bottle.

Claudia Arden snarled like an angry cat, contemplated the surgeon a moment and then swept from the library.

"So ends my tragi-comedy," he said; "ladies, Mr. Ogilvie, I think the Superintendent and myself may now retire."

The surgeon and his companion departed amid a series of grateful, if rather melancholy farewells.

Lieutenant Ogilvie went out with them into the hall. The surgeon availed himself of the opportunity to put a question.

"That perfume in the bottle responsible for the injury to to Miss Arden," he queried; "what was it? I owe it a debt of gratitude—had it not showered upon Miss Hilary's hair and her cousin's skirts in that singular contest last night, I should for once have been at a loss."

"Oh," said the lieutenant; "that was an extract of the Luzon lily—a rare perfume I sent Hilary from the Philippines. By the bye," and he drew the divisional surgeon aside, "the forger of those bills was Hilary's own brother, a middy on the *Melancthon*. They were held here and she got them back, I finding the cash in the hope of keeping it from his mother."

"And there was nothing but that in the letters?" asked the surgeon, with a smile.

"Well," said Roland Ogilvie, flushing ingenuously, "perhaps there was."

"Quite so," answered Lucius Shand; "in that case I congratulate you."

And he hurried after the thoughtful Superintendent.

[The next of this series, "The Riddle of the Gipsy Caravan," will be published in the number dated May 24.]

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

He Offers up his Life in the Interests of Medical Science.

Whenever Mr. Bowser has any lofty purpose in view Mrs. Bowser can detect it as soon as he enters the house, and, though the knowledge may not aid her to turn him aside, it somewhat prepares her for the shock to come.

He had been very quiet for a week and had not even hinted at buying pigs or chickens when he came home with a glow on his face. In addition to the glow, there was a look of stern resolution, and her heart beat faster as she wondered whether he was going to experiment on the gas meter or overhaul the interior of the piano. He treated her with a bland condescension during the dinner-hour and had no information to give, and it was not until the meal was finished that he said:

"Mrs. Bowser, you may have seen something in the papers about the dispute between Professor Boxly and Dr. Hurley?"

"I don't remember," she replied.

"Probably not. If it had been a bit of social scandal, you'd have remembered all about it, but as it related to medical science you didn't think it worth reading. The dispute, as I may inform you, arose over the cause of influenza. The doctor asserted that it was simply a disorder which was spread by its infectious nature, and the professor contended that the moon was directly responsible for it in every case."

"But how could the moon be responsible? What an absurd idea!"

"Don't go too fast, my dear woman. If you had read his articles, you would not call the idea absurd. Have you ever noticed a mist rising from the earth at night?"

"Perhaps I have sometimes."

"Well, that mist is caused by the moon, even when the moon is no to be seen. The mist is sometimes easily seen. At other times you do not perceive it. This mist is composed of the germs of influenza. There is always most mist at a full moon, and consequently the number of cases of influenza are greater. Do you follow me?"

"No, I don't," replied Mrs. Bowser. "I don't believe the moon is any more responsible for influenza than my old shoes, while it is well known that it is spread in the same manner as every other epidemic."

"Good! Good!" chuckled Mr. Bowser. "I am glad to hear you express a decided opinion. We now come to the point in the case. I have decided in the interests of medical science to prove or disprove the professor's theory."

"W-what are you going to do?"

"Offer myself as a sacrifice. To-night, we have a glorious full moon, and there will be a mist. I will sit in the full orb of night and make a square test. If the influenza follows, then it follows that Professor Boxly is right. If not, then I will purposely take infection from an influenza patient to-morrow night."

"But if you have a bad attack of influenza you may die," protested Mrs. Bowser.

"Exactly, my dear woman—exactly," said Mr. Bowser, with a flourish of his hand. "If I die, however, it will be in the interests of science and save thousands of others. Someone has got to sacrifice himself, and why shouldn't it be me?"

Mrs. Bowser could say nothing further. Having made up his mind to sit in the moonlight, Mr. Bowser would sit there even if the house took fire. He was in no hurry, however. He got down the encyclopædia and looked up "moon" and "mists," and by ten o'clock he felt himself thoroughly posted. As Mrs. Bowser was ready to go upstairs she asked:

"Where do you propose to carry out this experiment?"

"I shall sit on the front steps," he replied.

"And how long will it take?"

"I can't say about that. I'll give it two hours anyhow. You go to bed, and don't worry about me. It will take the influenza germs a day or two to develop. I think I'll take the cat out for company."

Five minutes later he took a seat on the top step, with the cat at his left hand. It was a warm and balmy night, and he was in his shirtsleeves and bareheaded. The cat didn't know anything about influenza or mists, and she didn't care in the very least whether the moon were full or not in sight at all, but she purred in contentment and kept her eyes fixed for flying insects. Mr. Bowser wasn't doing his work in a slipshod fashion. He had a notebook and pencil with him, and he jotted down notes for the benefit of Professor Boxly and mankind in general.

"10 o'clock.—Just sat down in the full light of the moon."

"10.5.—Think I observe a slight mist."

"10.10.—Am positive there is a mist."

"10.20.—Feel shivery, and the cat has shuddered once or twice."

"10.30.—Slight coldness up and down the spine."

"10.40.—The cat is looking about in a strange manner as if seeing germs."

"11 o'clock.—Cat is still uneasy, and I believe I have absorbed the germs of influenza. If the disease should prove fatal——"

That was the end of his notes. Just then an old woman with a stick and a basket came along and halted at the gate. Mr. Bowser was watching for mists and gave her no attention until she opened the gate and entered, and said:

"Yes, it's the same man, and now he's got to make things right."

"What's the matter, my good woman?" he asked.

"The matter is that you passed a lead sixpence off on a poor widder. I want a good sixpence in exchange."

"You mean you came here asking for charity and I gave you a bad coin?"

"That's it, sir. You knew I was a widder who hadn't bread in the house, but you worked a game on me."

"I never did!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser. "You must be mistaken in the house."

"Not at all, sir. I remember your bald head and red face

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and way of speaking. Yes, it was you, and now you must do the right thing or there'll be trouble!"

"Woman, go on! I know nothing about it. You are either drunk or crazy."

But she refused to go on. On the contrary, she began talking in such shrill tones that the neighbours wakened and looked out of their windows. Mr. Bowser forgot the moon, the mists, and influenza, and seized the woman by the arm and led her to the gate. She fought back and raised her voice still higher, and of a sudden two policeman came running.

They saw a woman in the grasp of a man, and that was sufficient. They seized Mr. Bowser on either side and wrenched and jammed and jerked him. Then as he tried to explain they slammed him against the fence and pushed him about and poked him in the ribs, and then away they went, dragging him between them.

They were just about to take him into the police-station when Mr. Bowser's family butcher happened along and induced them to listen and finally decide on letting him go. He limped back to the house. The moon still shed her glorious beams, but he saw her not. There was a mist hovering about the cat waiting at the gate, but he gave it no heed. With sighs and groans he drew himself up the steps and kicked open the door, and as he saw Mrs. Bowser in the hall he extended his arm until his finger almost touched her nose and hoarsely whispered:

"Would-be assassin, behold your work! You were coming to exult over my corpse. Make no excuses to me, for they won't go. To-morrow, woman, we separate for ever, and I—I——"

He couldn't get out another word, and as he stood panting and gasping and gesticulating, she went back upstairs, and the cat demurely followed.

M. Quad.

The Hampstead Mystery.

A Story of a Woman's Justice.

By LEVIN CARNAC.

"Shortly after six this morning, a workman going to his employment across Hampstead Fields, was horrified to find lying on the ground under the trees two human bodies, which he at first took to be lifeless, but closer examination if anything increased the man's horror, by showing him that one of the bodies was that of a young man of about six-and-twenty years of age, who had evidently hanged himself, while the other was that of a young lady in a fainting condition, who had apparently cut the suicide down, and then fallen fainting on the body.

"Information was at once given to the police, who removed the two unfortunates to the station where the divisional surgeon soon restored the young lady to consciousness, after which she was sent to her residence in a cab. The police refused to answer any inquiries as to the identity of the deceased or that of the young lady. An inquest will be held this afternoon, and in our late edition we hope to be able to put fuller details of this mysterious affair before our readers."

The above appeared at the head of the sensation columns of a prominent London evening paper one morning now nearly four years ago. The extra special edition contained the following somewhat meagre addition to it:

"At the inquest held this afternoon it transpired that the young man was named Lionel Hudson. He was extremely well-connected, and occupied the post of assistant cashier in a very old-established private bank, Boyle's, in Throgmorton Street. No cause was shown by the evidence for the rash act, as Mr. Hudson, so far as is known, was in no trouble previous to his death. In addition to his salary he was in receipt of an ample allowance from his father, and although he had strong leanings towards sport, and was in the habit of backing his fancy now and again on the turf, it is not known that he ever went beyond his depths, or suffered from any financial embarrassments or other troubles which could have driven him to so dreadful a refuge.

"The name of the young lady has not transpired, a medical certificate being handed in to the coroner to the effect that she was suffering from a severe attack of hysteria, which made her incapable of understanding anything that was said to her or answering questions coherently. As there was no doubt about the cause of death, the jury, after viewing the body, returned a formal verdict in the usual terms."

The following day, the growing public interest in what was called the "Hampstead Mystery," was suddenly and permanently diverted to the more congenially interesting subject of a peculiarly horrible murder of the Whitechapel type, and so the Hampstead tragedy, or whatever it was, dropped quickly out of the public ken, and the story of the suicide and the girl who had fainted on his dead body after cutting him down, remained unknown until the present time of writing.

It was a bright, soft, summer night—one of those wonderfully brilliant moonlight nights for which the coast of Brittany is famed—and a man and a woman were walking slowly along the splendid sweep of smooth, sloping sand of which the good town of St. Malo is so justly proud.

The woman was little more than twenty, if, indeed, she had quite got out of her teens. Her face was a pretty one, but it was that kind of face which, without the indefinable charm of expression which lighted it up, would have looked almost plain. She was well, in fact, expensively, dressed, though quietly and in excellent taste, and she carried her clothes with an easy, unconscious grace which, added to her good looks and facial charm of expression, made her about as fascinating a woman as a man ever lost his head over.

Her companion was a man a year or two on the right side of thirty—a tall, well set-up young fellow, with good features, close-curling blonde hair, and an irreproachable silken moustache. His complexion was a healthy bronze and, altogether, he would have had every claim to be considered a distinctly handsome man had it not been for the fact that his eyes were just about half a shade too light, and that they were rather more mobile than a strong man's eyes ought to be.

Their conversation was evidently one in which both were deeply interested. While they were near the Casino, and within earshot of the little groups and pairs of people who were also enjoying the moonlight on the *plage*, they spoke almost in an undertone, as though they didn't care about anyone else overhearing them, but when they got a little way

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out to where the groups and pairs — now mostly pairs—were widely scattered over the broad sands, they spoke up a little more, and if you had been within ten yards of them, as you may be quite sure no one was, you might have heard the woman say:

"Yes, I thought it would startle you a bit. It is rather a novel proposal, I confess, but I really cannot see why a few minutes' thought shouldn't show you that it is entirely reasonable."

"Reasonable!" exclaimed the man, with a short, uneasy laugh. "Surely you don't call it reasonable to ask a man who has worked hard and raised himself by his own exertions——"

"Assisted by some remarkably lucky speculations made on information which was, well, we will say, at least very timely," interrupted the woman, looking up at him with something like a sneer on her pretty lips.

"Now, my dear Madge, surely we haven't come out here to quarrel. I have not rejected your proposal, I was only saying how very extraordinary it is, and perhaps I was hoping that when I had put all the circumstances before you you might, of your mercy, make the terms a little less hard."

He spoke gently, almost fondly, for he was hopelessly in love with this fascinating girl-woman, and had loved her for years before she had married the husband who was not himself—an event which had taken place not quite four months before. He would dearly have liked to slip his hand inside her arm and take hold of the little neatly-gloved hand that was keeping her skirt clear of the sand, but the moonlight was a little too bright for that, since it was quite bright enough for them to have been recognised by others staying in the hotel. So he kept his distance, about eighteen inches or so from her side, and walked on, pulling at his cigar, and switching at the sand with his cane, in a way that made him look the most careless and the least interested of strollers.

"Less hard!" she said, with a somewhat mirthless little laugh. "Come, now, I don't quite see how you can expect that, when you see all the circumstances, as you call them. Let us look at the said circumstances and see. You are, well, we will say, an old sweetheart of mine, one of two about whose existence as such poor Sir George knows nothing. A couple of years ago you were chief cashier at Boyle's Bank. You got on very fast, and now, by a combination of good luck and good management, you are almost wealthy. Your rival is dead——"

"Don't talk about that, Madge, for Heaven's sake!" he interrupted, almost harshly. "Don't bring that terrible story up again. Heaven only knows why poor Leo should have done that. Certainly it was not on account of any decided preference that you showed for me, for neither of us could tell one day from the other which one of us you liked better. But, there, that's gone and done with; we will let the poor fellow rest in his grave. It is the present and the future that concerns us."

"Very well," she said, in a tone whose evenness made it sound almost hard; "we will let the past bury its dead, as you say, and come to the present and the future. I married Sir George, as I am not ashamed to confess, for his money and his position, and I've already found that I've made a very bad bargain—so bad that I am almost careless of what happens to me if I could only escape from a bondage that is getting intolerable.

"Now you, to put it frankly—brutally, if you like—want me to leave him and go off with you, as a good many other men and women have done under similar circumstances, and I have told you that I am willing to do so on one condition."

"And what a condition!" he exclaimed, with a shrug of his shoulders. "The sacrifice of my honour and good name!"

"Spoken—well—like a man, if not much like a lover!" she exclaimed, with a touch of bitterness in her tone. "And what about my honour and good name? Come now, Frank, be sensible, and look at it like the man of business that you used to be.

"You ask me to forfeit my position in the world, temporarily at least, and with it everything that a woman is supposed to hold dear. Of course, I am perfectly aware that it is quite possible nowadays for people to go through the divorce court, marry again, and be perfectly respectable members of society all the while. I risk everything and you nothing, except the law costs and damages. Surely it is fair that I should ask you to incur a risk equal to mine."

"But that is the risk of making myself an outcast—no, worse than that, a felon," he objected again, this time a trifle more strenuously than before.

"There is no risk at all," she said; "save in one event, and that can only come to pass through your breaking faith with me, which, of course, you don't for a moment dream of doing."

"Of course not!" he exclaimed. "Therefore, why——"

"Because—well—because, if you like, it is a woman's whim that you should do so," she said, decidedly. "My mind is quite made up on that point. If you take me you must take the risk as well. You want me to commit what is a crime in the moral sense. There is only a social penalty for that, and it falls on me and not on you, according to the justice of Society. In return I want you to commit a crime that carries a criminal punishment with it, so that for the time being," she went on, with a nervous little laugh, "we shall be two criminals together.

"After all it is very simple. You are to forge Sir George's name to a cheque for a thousand pounds, and give the cheque to me. I shall have it sealed up in the charge of my solicitor. When the proceedings are over and we are married I will give you the cheque back. You can destroy it, and no one but ourselves will know that it has ever been in existence. You must see that it could only become known—as it would do—in the event of your playing me false after I have risked and lost everything for you, a contingency which prudence forbids me to believe quite impossible. And now, please, you must say yes or no, because we have gone quite far enough, and my interesting invalid only gave me an hour for my stroll in the cool of the evening under your protecting escort. Doesn't that sound funny? So now, Frank, I have already said yes. What do you say?"

For just one fatal moment he hesitated, and, as usual under such circumstances, in that moment he was lost.

"Yes," he said, speaking quickly and a little hoarsely, "if I must, I must. I can't lose you now that I have so nearly won you, so give it to me and I will do it. Have you got it with you?"

"Yes," she said, taking out her purse and giving him a little slip of paper, pale green on one side and pale pink on the other. "A thousand pounds, mind, payable to yourself, and crossed. You will give it to me to-morrow, won't you? If the imitation is not good enough you will have to try again, mind. You have got plenty of specimens to work by."

When Frank Meredith reached his room some three hours later, having seen her ladyship back to her apartment and taken leave of her husband, he set himself to work without delay on his terrible task, and after several trials succeeded in making an excellent imitation of Sir George's signature on the cheque, and an equally good imitation of his figures and writing in the necessary places.

"There," he said, "I think that will do," when he had blotted it, and carefully destroyed the blotting-paper and all the experimental copies he had made beforehand. "At any rate, it is good enough for the purpose, for, after all, it is only to satisfy her. It wouldn't be very much use to her for this to be found in her possession, or even with her solicitor.

"She doesn't seem to know it has to be presented before there is any crime, and as she can't present it, and I won't, I

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don't see that there is any great danger in it after all. It's a funny whim, though, even for a woman to have. Fond and all as I am of her, I don't altogether like the want of confidence it shows. Hang it! I've half a mind to tear the thing up, and have done with it now. But no, I've too nearly got her now; I can't lose her. I'll give it to her. There can't be any danger in it, for she stands to lose more than I do; and, of course, I shall marry her when it is all over, so she couldn't betray me."

He met her after breakfast the next morning, and found an opportunity of giving her the envelope containing the cheque. As she took it she looked at him in a fashion that set his blood on fire, and said, very sweetly:

"Now I see that you trust me as much as I trust you We are going to Paris this evening by the night mail. I suppose we shall see you, as arranged, in about a week's time?"

"Yes," he said, "I won't make it longer, you may be sure."

And so they parted.

It was just a week after that Mr. Frank Meredith called on Sir George and Lady Chesnil at the Hotel Bristol, only to receive to his astonishment and dismay a curt "Not at home" from Sir George's English valet. He called again, with the same result, and then he wrote to Lady Chisnel, imploring her for an explanation. The letter came back unopened, and the same day he met Madge and her husband in the Champs Elysées and they cut him dead. There could only be one explanation. Her ladyship had been fooling him all the time, and must in some way have played him false in the matter of the cheque.

That very same evening her ladyship was sitting with Sir George in their private sitting-room with a number of cheques and a bank-book in front of her, for she already managed all her husband's private money mattersfor him.

"What is this, George?" she said picking up a cheque and staring at it in well-simulated astonishment. "What on earth did you owe Mr. Meredith a thousand pounds for?"

"Mr. Meredith! A thousand pounds! Nonsense, little woman, nonsense! I never owed him or paid him a sovereign in my life," replied her husband.

"Oh, but here is a cheque in what certainly looks like your handwriting for a thousand pounds in his favour, and it has been paid. Look at it."

Sir George took the slip of paper with trembling hands and looked at it closely for a moment. Then he gave it back, and said, testily:

"That's not my writing, Madge; I think you ought to know better than that. I never wrote it. It's a forgery. And so this precious acquaintance of yours, Mr. Meredith, would seem not to be content with trying to tempt you from your duty and honour, but he must try and rob me as well. Send for Charles, and tell him to telegraph to the bank at once."

This was done, and before noon on the following day a telegram came back from the manager of the bank, saying, first, that the cheque had been received in the usual way through the clearing-house from Mr. Meredith's own bank, that inquiries had been made there, and that he was told that a cheque had been received from Mr. Meredith in St. Malo, wrapped in a sheet of note-paper on which was scribbled: "Herewith cheque £1,000 to credit.—F. M."

Sir George, acting under the advice of his wife, at once communicated with the police. The offence had been plainly committed on French soil, and the offender was therefore amenable to French law. Within less than an hour Mr. Meredith was arrested and taken before the *juge d'instruction*. He protested his innocence, denied all knowledge of the cheque, and so was put back pending information from England.

The next day two clerks came over, one from Sir George's bank and one from Meredith's. The former repeated the substance of the telegram in evidence; the other produced the envelope and a sheet of note-paper, which had accompanied the cheque, and said in explanation that Mr. Meredith, travelling about a good deal as he did, and drawing his income from various sources in consequence of his investments, some of which were known to be loan transactions, frequently sent in odd cheques like this when he happened to be staying in a place where the English banks had no branches, and, therefore, they considered the affair to be quite regular.

If the writing on the envelope and the paper were not his, it was a wonderfully good imitation of his hand when he was writing in a hurry.

In the end Meredith was sent to trial to the Correctional Tribunal, and on hearing this he first offered to pay the amount of the cheque to stop proceedings, and when this was refused, as it was now impossible to do it under French law, he lost his temper and told the whole story, which, of course, her ladyship had only to deny indignantly for it to be thoroughly disbelieved. The Correctional Tribunal sent Mr. Frank Meredith to hard labour for four years at Toulon, and when at length he came out, broken in health and ruined in reputation, to find the money that he had worked so hard for deprived of all its best powers of benefiting him, he received, on the day after his arrival in England, a letter addressed to him at his solicitors. The address on the envelope was type-written. He opened it, and inside it was a sheet of paper with these words, also type-written, and without signature:

"The law has no punishment for the crime that sent to his death the man you must often have thought of in your cell. It was only a lie that you told him, but it killed him, for it made him believe that he had lost, and lost to you, what was far dearer than life to him. He wrote me the story that night, but I was too late to save him; you know that I only found him dead. My marriage was a loveless one, but it was honourable. How far I was from dreaming of letting you dishonour it you may, perhaps, be able to guess, now that you have suffered something like the punishment which your crime deserved."

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A Bit of Blue Chiffon.

"In the first place," stated Miss Lamson, with a mischievous dimple at the corner of her mouth, "the man I marry must be capable of shopping intelligently should occasion require."

Tom looked up with amazing promptness from the morning paper, which, ostensibly, he had been reading for the past ten minutes. In reality he had heard much of the lively discussion pursued by his sister and his sister's pretty friend.

Miss Lamson frequently came over from Kensington to Hampstead to visit Florence. They had persuaded her to remain last night and she had breakfasted with them this morning. Hence Tom's delay in going down to the office. He had been wishing, as he sat scanning the same news column at least twenty times, that he could discover the proper course to pursue with this extremely baffling and bewildering young woman. Doris Lamson was the most tantalising bit of femininity that he had as yet encountered.

"Would you please repeat that last statement, Miss Lamson?" he now requested.

"I was saying," replied she of the saucy eyes, "that the man I marry must know how to shop. He must, for instance, be able to match a pattern correctly."

"That, surely, would be an easy test," observed Tom with conviction. "Given the sample, a man of direct and business-like methods would have little difficulty in the matter."

"Do you mean it?"

"Most certainly. The reason you women have so much trouble is because you don't go at things in a systematic manner. Now, a man——"

"Oh, we all know what a man would do," retorted the fair visitor. "The point is, are you willing to prove it?"

Tom was on his feet in an instant.

"Do you mean that?" he asked quickly, with significance. "If so, I stand ready for a trial."

"Good!" laughed Florence, delightedly. "Let him match that blue chiffon for your blouse, Doris. You brought the pattern in your purse, you know."

"Agreed," said Miss Lamson.

Tom fingered the bit of fabric vaguely.

"How much of this cloth do you want?" he asked, as he got into his overcoat.

"Cloth!" repeated both girls, laughing hysterically.

"There's a man for you, Doris," cried Tom's sister. "Any kind of goods—veiling, chiffon, net—all of it is cloth to him."

"What shall I say?" demanded Tom, with dignity.

"Well, this is chiffon, sir. Pale blue chiffon. Be sure you get just that shade. Three yards, please. Don't forget. It is for the accordion pleating, also for a finish at the cuff."

"All right," interrupted Tom hastily. He began to feel a trifle uncomfortable. "I'll take an hour off this afternoon and get it for you." Then, brightening suddenly, "May I bring it over to you this evening, Miss Lamson—you'll be at home?"

"Well, you could have it sent, you know," she flashed back roguishly.

"Now, Doris, stop teasing," remonstrated Tom's sister. "Yes, Tom, you may take it to her. So now go."

The thought that he had actually received this commission from Miss Lamson sent a warm glow to his heart. He felt quite like a benedict, when, that afternoon, he found himself at the silk counter of the shop he had entered.

"The third counter on the right hand side of the next room but one," said the assistant to whom he had shown the pattern.

Tom proceeded in the direction indicated, and after devious windings and turnings found himself in the department. Keenly aware that his customary "direct and business-like methods" were failing him at this critical point, he retraced his steps and began a series of inquiries at various departments. He found fancy hosiery, linings, silks—everything but chiffon. Finally a pitying shopwalker rescued him and piloted him to the desired haven.

And now for business.

"Can you match this?" inquired Tom, briskly.

The young woman in attendance was sure she could. "Ah, yes. Here it is. Just the thing, isn't it?"

Tom looked at the goods she was unfolding. He felt the need for firmness. He hated to contradict her ladyship, but it must be done. He told her as politely as possible that the two shades were widely dissimilar.

"I'm sure you won't be able to match it any nearer than that," she averred, quite undaunted. "Now, we have that exact tint in other materials. How about liberty silk, gauze or——"

"No, thank you," said Tom, hurriedly. "Nothing will do but this very cloth."

Confound it, he had said it again! He was sure, as he turned away, that he heard her laughing behind his back.

He had less difficulty in finding the chiffon counter at the next shop. A tall young lady with a large pompadour and faultless finger nails took the pattern and bestowed upon him a glance of lofty serenity.

"We don't keep this shade," she informed him. "It isn't worn this season."

"It is the shade I want," said Tom, icily.

The young lady unbent sufficiently to exhibit some of the new shades.

"This," she indicated, "is an extremely pretty thing—the very latest."

"But," protested Tom, "it doesn't match the sample."

The young lady mused for a moment.

"Did your wife want it for a blouse?" she inquired at length.

Tom blushed furiously. "Y—yes. That is, she has already part of it, and——"

"Well, I'll tell you what you might do. Suppose you get enough of this for an entirely new blouse, and let her use what she has for something else."

Tom began to mop his forehead.

"How is the blouse made?" pursued the young lady, sweetly.

"I—I'm sure I don't know," he stammered in alarm. There was only one thing to do, and Tom did it. He secured the pattern and bolted, conscious that a politely astonished pair of eyes followed him even to the door.

At the next place he encountered a professional hypnotist in the disguise of a counter jumper. At least that was the conclusion Tom reached—afterwards. He was sure that nothing else could ever have induced him to commit an act of folly while fully conscious of it. When this assistant said, with finality, "Here is just what you want. How many yards, please?" Tom meekly answered "Three." He stood dumbly by and saw the shears flash through the fluffy fabric. The deed was done.

Out in the daylight he opened the parcel. Oh, the sickening difference! Miss Lamson's was a soft, dull blue; this had a greenish tinge!

Tom walked on miserably. One thing was certain. He would not, could not face her with that awful greenish blue chiffon. He obeyed his first wild impulse and slid the parcel into the pillar box at the corner.

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"How would you like to be the postman?" was the hilarious thought that darted through his brain. He could afford to be happy now. That leaden weight was out of his pocket.

He could now start afresh. At the very next shop he met with success. He found the exact shade of the sample. It was really wonderful how perfectly identical the tints were. He started for the Underground with a step as light as air. He smiled behind his newspaper all the way home.

Florence had gone out for dinner, so he had to dispense with her congratulations.

When he called at Miss Lamson's that evening his face was radiant.

She opened the parcel with bright, eager eyes.

"Ah, you did get it, didn't you?" she exclaimed. Then her expression changed suddenly. "Why, I told you to get chiffon!"

"Well?" gasped Tom, in horror.

"This is mousseline de soie!"

"Muslin—muslin de what?"

Tom sank dizzily into a chair. He had a vision of whirling clouds of blue chiffon. Then he heard Miss Lamson's voice. There was a little tremble in it. "Poor boy! You needn't feel so dreadfully over it. I know you tried awfully hard—and——"

Tom looked up. Something in her eyes made him bold. "Doris!" he cried. He put his arms round her and she did not resist.

"Dear Doris," he asked humbly, "will you accept a man who loves you very dearly, even though he can't match a pattern?"

Miss Lamson's reply sounded rather muffled, but Tom was satisfied.

Angela Morgan.

THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAIN.

A Tourist's Pretty Love Adventure.

"Don't you think so?" repeated Jack, sitting up and leaning on his elbow. I grunted assent and pretended to fall asleep.

I was fifteen years older than Jack and had promised to be his guide, philosopher and friend. His mother was particularly anxious that during our tramp in the mountains, he should see nothing at all in the shape of a woman, and think of nothing more exciting than fishing and photography. He had been deeply interested in a city belle the winter before, and she had turned him off in such a cruel, calculating way, that he was not the same man for months after.

It was early morning, and we had thrown ourselves down on a grassy ledge, after a steep climb up the mountain side, and were preparing to rest, when my young brother-in-law had caught sight of a female figure, standing perfectly motionless under an elder tree. We were too far away to distinguish many details, but could see that the woman was young and slender, was clad in pale lilac and was looking down the steep roadway.

The wooded hills made a good background, the girl's attitude expressed anxious expectation, and her pose was certainly graceful and unstudied. Jack asserted that she made a picture worth painting, and then finding I did not assent with enthusiasm, he left me to my nap and went a little nearer to the picture.

I must have fallen into a genuine doze, for the next thing I knew, Jack was sitting beside me again, breathless and excited, as if just returned from a tour of discovery. I glanced across the gorge; the female figure was no longer to be seen.

"Have you been over there?" I asked, and he nodded. His blue eyes were dancing with delight.

"Such a face!" he cried; "such hair, such colouring! I was quite near her before she dreamt of my existence, and when she saw me she gave a little gasp and fled like a deer. There's not a house within ten miles except a miserable little hut, only one storey high, down there by the brook, so that must be her home. Just to think of that lovely creature living in these wilds! Why, Will, if she were properly dressed she would look as well as the greatest lady in the land!"

When he stopped for breath, I hastened to refer cynically to the favourite heroines of magazine fiction—those phenomenal creatures who, born and reared in the atmosphere of squalor and illiteracy, to say the least, develop all manner of delicate feminine graces when the handsome young tourist comes along, and who usually die for love of him, or from a sense of duty, on the last page of the story.

If he thought to have the girl in the lilac gown as the central figure in his views, he was sadly disappointed, for she seemed to guess his intention and to be possessed of a wild terror at sight of the camera. When we had made several futile attempts to surprise her at a distance, we decided to strike camp, as it were, and stroll over to the little hut in search of dinner. Jack went first and I followed.

As I walked up, I made up my mind that if a closer acquaintance with the maid of the mountain did not serve to dispel his delusion, I would telegraph to his mother. We came, we saw, but we did not conquer.

The young woman was looking down the road again, with her hand shading her eyes, and her ragged sleeve falling back from her shapely arm. The arm, however, was decidedly sunburnt; her hair was coiled up in a slovenly fashion, and held by two pointed twigs, and her eyes were fine, I could not deny that. We had hardly time to take in these details when she saw us coming, and hurrying into the little hut, shut the door with a very decided slam.

"Her manners have not that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere," I murmured, as Jack's tall, lithe form went swinging after her, but he tapped at the door as gaily as if he had not received a snub. I, more modest, kept back and did not hear the dialogue which took place, when an old woman appeared in answer to repeated knocks. I saw, however, by her gestures and expressions, that she was deaf. In a few minutes Jack came back to me saying:

"They will give us something to eat, but we cannot go in. It is a wretched hovel, only one room, with a curtain of some kind strung across it. I saw an old man inside, and he said we could get all the meals we wanted down at the 'Corners.'"

I remarked that as soon as we had lunched we would go to the same "Corners," for a post-bag was due there, and I was anxious to have news of my little girl. Jack looked at me suspiciously, and exclaimed:

"The child is all right. What is the use of your tramping all the way down the mountain again for a letter? I'll not go with you, old man."

My brother-in-law looked so determined that I knew persuasion would be in vain, only strategy would answer the purpose, so I answered:

"Very well, wait for me here if you'd rather," and at that moment the deaf woman brought us some sandwiches on a tin plate, and returned to the hut without speaking. We lunched in thoughtful silence, and Jack saying suddenly, "I want to send a letter," pulled out his writing materials, wrote hurriedly, and then handed me a letter directed to a bookseller in London.

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"Whatever is he up to?" I wondered, as I set off. After a long walk I reached the "Corners," a hamlet consisting of twenty houses, at one of which a diminutive post-bag was left twice a week. Hardly waiting to read my wife's letter, which was awaiting me, I hired a horse and rode at top speed to the neares ttelegraph station which was five miles distant.

The message I sent would have seemed quite simple to most persons, but my wife has a wise little head and I trusted to it. "Is your mother well? Telegraph," I said to her, and in a few hours I had her answer: "Mother not well, come at once."

Just what I wanted! My Nell scented danger in the air and rose to the occasion. She is a wife in a thousand. I turned back at once, reached the "Corners" before midnight, secured a bed in the farmhouse post-office, and at daybreak went up the mountain.

I found Jack asleep in a shed near the little hut, and as soon as he awoke I discovered that he had been enjoying himself in my absence. He expressed no surprise at my having been away so long, but began talking about that girl as soon as his eyes opened. He had learnt that her name was Mildred, for someone in the house had called her.

She had come out several times to look down the road, as before, and he had caught some fish in the brook and presented them to her, and she had cooked them divinely and brought some out to him for supper, and he had thanked her and gazed at her unrebuked, and had talked to her several minutes as she stood before him in the gloaming, while the leaves on the trees whispered all around them, and the brook gurgled melodiously and the moon came out.

It had evidently been very pastoral and poetical, and I was determined to get him home, so I handed him his sister's telegram and began packing up our traps. He was silent for some time, but I knew what was passing through his mind. As soon as his mother got well, he would come back to the maid of the mountain.

So I was positively glad when, on our reaching home, I saw the doctor's carriage before our door. My wife had shown the telegram to her mother and the dear old lady had worried herself into an attack of nerves. We all agreed that Jack must take her abroad with some friends who were crossing next week. In the midst of preparations for departure, I saw my brother-in-law directing a package of papers to Miss Mildred Mason, the "Corners," and I exclaimed in surprise:

"How did you find out her name?"

"Oh, I managed to get it out of her mother, the deaf woman," he answered hurriedly; "and I am sending something to the girl in the way of literature. I have ordered the bookseller to send her an interesting paper or book every week while I am away. Her mind must be yearning for food."

I was thankful when the boat started.

In accordance with my advice Mrs. Hathaway stayed abroad for two years, and I was glad to find, when they returned, that Jack seemed much older and more sensible, in fact quite heart-whole and fancy free. He made no mention of that girl, so I concluded that he had forgotten her.

Very soon after his return, however, we all happened to be asked to go down to Southampton on a friend's yacht to see some races. There were many people on board whom we did not know, and just as the principal race began, my brother-in-law came up to me in great excitement, whispering:

"She is here!"

"She? Who?" I asked, and he replied:

"The maid of the mountain, and lovelier than ever—come!" In desperation I followed him to the other end of the yacht and saw a very beautiful girl, dressed in perfect taste, whose face seemed familiar.

"It is Mildred Mason," said Jack, "but what a change! I told you she needed only proper toggery—I must hunt up someone to present me," and he was off. I was lost in wonder. Jack must have made a mistake. I asked some one the name of the pretty girl who was now talking to my brother-in-law.

"Oh, that's Miss Ashleigh," was the reply, and I chuckled with delight. She and Jack remained together the whole afternoon and I hovered near and wondered. They were quite oblivious of my existence, however, and I could not help overhearing their talk. After a pause, she said:

"I suppose, Mr. Hathaway, you are wondering where you and I have met before. I should not be surprised if you had forgotten all about it, for you must have often been out fishing in the mountains, but it was my first and only adventure and I shall never forget it. I should have enjoyed the sensation if I had not been so worried about mamma."

Jack and I both listened spell-bound.

"You see, she sprained her ankle, besides inhaling a great deal of smoke, and was suffering from shock, and I thought my father would never come. More than a day and a night we passed in those woods alone with the Masons."

Jack's interest in her words were entirely unfeigned. I could see that he was longing for more light on the matter, and I admired his tact, when he asked:

"How did it happen?"

"A defective flue, I believe," said she, taking his question in a restricted sense. "Mrs. Mason was lighting the kitchen fire, and did not know anything was the matter until the flames were beyond control. Mamma and I were awakened just in time to rush out, and we lost all our clothing. I had not even a hairpin.

"The people at the 'Corners' came to our rescue, but mamma could not get further down the mountain than that wretched hut where you found us. I was dreadfully afraid you would photograph me in that old lilac gown that someone had lent me."

"Had you been living there long?"

"Yes, all summer, and every summer for years. It was a charming spot and such a picturesque old house. I had painted a number of views and we were just thinking of going back home when we were burnt out.

"My father arrived on the second day with our clothes and our doctor. Do you know, Mr. Hathaway, my mother and I were so glad you stayed there that night, though we could not cultivate your acquaintance. Mamma will be delighted to hear I have met you. What is that? A photograph of me in that lilac gown! How did you manage to take it?"

"It was two years ago to-day," he said earnestly, "and the picture has never left me." His next words were spoken so low that I did not catch them. Just then there was a sudden excitement around us. The race was over, but I am sure that neither of those two knew or cared which boat had won.

The next day Jack Hathaway had the effrontery to tell me that I had been an idiot to suppose for an instant that Miss Mildred Ashleigh was anything but a lady born and bred, just because she wore a ragged gown—he, with his superior power of discernment, had taken in the situation at a glance.

Isabel Smithson.

Pencil-cases for Everybody!

Every person who distributes fifteen little illustrated leaflets about our new serial story, "Out of Great Tribulation," to fifteen different people, will be presented with a beautiful little silver-plated pencil-case. Write a postcard for conditions and a parcel of fifteen leaflets to the Publisher, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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HELEN DACY went to Alton—not because she was insane, but because she had a second cousin who was. Alton is a beautiful town, but its tramway service is not good, and Helen walked through the village up to the pleasant park with which the State has surrounded the asylum for the insane. It is a walk of considerable length from the gate of the grounds to the building, and Helen was to encounter a melancholy sight. As she went along the serpentine path, a procession came towards her. There must have been a hundred men in it, and they walked slowly and most of them with bowed heads.

Their feet appeared to press the earth heavily. At first Helen thought it must be a funeral procession, but a moment later she perceived that it was something more distressing. It was the walk of those who had survived their own death. In other words, it was a body of insane patients, exercising the bodies that held their perished minds. Helen shrank aside and stood fascinated while they passed her. Some of them looked at her curiously, or with lacklustre gaze, or wistfully. A sudden appreciation of her own youth and health and sanity came over her, and made her feel all the more pitiful.

The procession had passed, and she was about to resume her way to the hospital, when one of the men quitted the ranks and walked hurriedly towards her. None of the rest looked round. The attendants had not noticed his desertion, and his steps on the sward made no sound. He came with a rapid, gliding step towards Helen, showing his teeth in a broad smile. Helen decided that, however impertinent his intentions might be, at least he was in good humour. This was consoling, but it did not keep her hands from turning cold with nervous dread.

As he approached he lifted his hat with a courtly air. It was evident that the poor wretch had once been a gentleman, but even the most gentlemanly of lunatics was not a companion to choose, and Helen moved behind a low lilac bush. She felt that she was white and that her eyes were wide-stretched, but she tried not to show her alarm. Confidence, she had always heard, was needed in dealing with the insane. The man moved more cautiously and fixed an undeviating gaze upon Helen.

"Madam," he said, in a peculiarly quiet voice, "it is a pleasant morning."

Something in the words suggested a scene in *Hamlet* to Helen, and she bethought herself of an experiment. She would soon determine whether or not the man had a gleam of reason.

"Is it?" she asked, turning her eyes to the sky. "Why, indeed, I thought it was raining!"

The man had a look in his face akin to pity. "Perhaps you are right," he replied gently. "It may be raining. It is not always possible for me to tell except when I see people carrying their umbrellas."

"Sensory nerves quite obtuse," thought Helen. "I have heard that it is common with degenerates." The man moved a little nearer, and Helen ventured to go still further behind the lilac bush. He stopped still, and they faced each other over the low shrubbery. What an agreeable looking creature he was, with his soft brown eyes, his long, delicate face, and his high brow. He looked as if he might have been intended for a poet. Probably he had been, but had gone one step further. Helen had not read Lombroso for nothing. "Do you ever write poetry?" she asked with genuine curiosity. The man blushed. Helen had not dreamt a lunatic would blush.

"When I find a fitting subject," he confessed.

"Ah! And what would you consider a fitting subject?"

"'Why—you!" The words came out explosively. They did not seem to be meant for a compliment. The man spoke pathetically. It seemed as if there were tears in his eyes. Helen answered as if he were a child.

"Do I seem so sad to you?" she asked. "Does it make the tears come in your eyes to look at me, poor man?"

"Indeed it does," he replied quite simply. "I think you are the saddest thing I ever saw."

"I wouldn't die for anything," she explained. "I like to live. I find plenty of things to laugh at." And to convince his wandering wits that this was the truth she broke into a merry laugh, which astonished the melancholy spirit of the place.

"If I give you my hand," said the man kindly, "will you not walk back with me to the house?"

To take his hand, to let him get a hold upon her! It was ghastly. He moved towards her. There seemed nothing for it but to run, and run she did, speeding over the soft lawn with a rapidity that astonished herself. She could hear him calling to her, but she sped on, till, finally, a hysterical impulse, borne of her fright and fatigue, took hold of her. She began to laugh again, and the musical, half-weeping laughter floated behind her as she fled. Then, breathless, she stumbled over a hill and fell flat. She buried her face in the grass and waited, her heart paining with the stress of its work. A second later two arms were about her and she was lifted to her feet.

She faced the lunatic. They were of a height, and they stood looking at each other, both of them pale and trembling, his arm still supporting her.

"Poor child," he murmured, "how sorry I am that I frightened you. Perhaps I ought not to have run after you. But I was afraid you would leave the grounds and come to some harm."

She would have liked to have explained to him that one need not come to harm outside the grounds, but perhaps it was as well that he thought otherwise. She would tell him the truth about herself. Perhaps he would understand. Ah, what a pity that such an engaging face should hide a ruined mind!

"You must try to understand," she said slowly, "that I do not live here in the—in the hospital. I am here for the first time. I have not yet been up to the—the building, you know. I came to visit a relative who is here. It seems a pleasant place. Have you been here long?"

"My dear young lady!" cried he, "I also am a visitor. I also came to visit an acquaintance, with whom I was walking a moment since. I approached you to ask if you knew when the next train went to town, but when I addressed you I judged from your reply that you were one of the inmates."

Helen sank gently down on the grass.

"I think I must rest a moment," said she. "I—I am much surprised!" Her tone indicated something more than surprise. It confessed to a great relief. She paid her visit to the asylum and she and Victor Law, her lunatic, went back by the same train together. To both of them the afternoon had seemed the most interesting of their lives.

"Why were there tears in your eyes," she asked before they parted, "when you talked with me at first?"

"Why, it seemed to me that I had never encountered anything so sad as a shattered mind behind eyes so—please, pardon me—so beautiful as yours. I know I am rude, but I must speak the truth. If you had been mad, I should have remembered you with sorrow all the days of my life."

"Being sane, I suppose you will forget me?"

But she knew well that he would not give himself the opportunity. She was quite certain that she should see him often. It would have been a grotesque anti-climax not to have met again after that afternoon.

D. C. L.

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A GOOD-NIGHT KISS.

The Romance of a Hospital Ward.

The doctor had made his last visit for the night and the nurse was left alone with her patient—a typhoid fever patient, muscular and raving. It was a private "contagious" ward, a room that was always like a ship's deck, cleared for action, with its metal bed of white enamel, its metal table and its grey-green wall, decorated only with "coloured supplement" prints, because these could be changed frequently and burnt easily. It was a room of a dim light and a tempered shadow—one of those bare hospital rooms where you feel that the flame of life, though it burns low, burns without a flicker, being protected and watched in its feebleness with no sentiment of love, but with the skilled care and the cool eye of unimpassioned science.

The nurse sat at the bedside, her hands folded in her lap, like a nun at meditation. There was something nun-like in her face, in its placidity beside such suffering, in the almost melancholy sweetness of the face of a woman who had looked many times on death alone at midnight, and who had lived for a long year now in the constant companionship of pain.

But, indeed, the expression belied her. She was watching her patient for signs of distress, listening intently to his breathing, with the subconscious alertness of the engineer who will sit musing with an eye on the steam gauge and an ear strained for the slightest change of note in the regular swing and cadence of the machinery. The poor fellow in the bed tossed and muttered fretfully. She soothed him with her voice—with a murmur of "Yes, yes. Go to sleep, then. Go to sleep," as if she were talking to a child. There was no sign of nervousness or anxiety about her. Only once, when she rose to take his pulse, she stood a moment to smooth down the stiff apron of her uniform with a slow palm, in an endeavour to loosen the starch in it so that it would not rustle. The patient was making a dry clutching in his mouth. She took a piece of ice from a bowl among the medicine bottles and glasses on the table and put it under his tongue. He sighed a breath of grateful weakness.

She stood looking down at him, smiling with a motherly pity. His eyes were closed.

He had been as self-willed in his illness as a spoilt child. He had been almost convalescent when, against all warning—while the day nurse was chatting with the doctor outside the door—he had staggered from his bed to a basket of fruit on the table and eaten two peaches before he was seen. The result was a relapse into a far more critical condition than he had been at first. Here he lay now, struggling against death itself. She wondered whether he had a sister who was fond of him—or a sweetheart?—who had been sending him these baskets of fruit.

He was breathing regularly in a fitful doze. She returned to her chair and leant forward to look at him with her chin in her hand.

Although she was not aware of it he had changed for her; from being a "case" he had become a human being with a claim of interest on her, and she frowned at his muttering of pain. Poor fellow! Life must have been so full for him of interests, activities, promises, achievements. To have it all end this way, futilely! He had given the college cry once in a delirium and struggled, panting, through a football game. And once he had been standing on the platform of debate. Another time he had been writing on an examination in law. And still another time she thought that she heard him speak Jim's name in the jumble of delirious mutterings.

Jim was to have been a lawyer. Poor Jim! Her eyes filled at that old, tear-stained memory of Jim and her father drowned together in that horrible accident on the *Princess*. Well, she at least had not been a burden on her mother's small income, and soon—as soon as she had qualified at the hospital—she would be not only self-supporting but an aid to the others. There were two long years of hard work before her yet. She bit her lip.

The untiring run and babble of his delirium had been growing louder. She went to him again to calm him with the sound of her voice, and he looked up at her with a smile that seemed almost rational. It was only momentary; he called her "Auntie," and began a childish prattle.

"I'm not sleepy," he said. "I don't want to go to bed, auntie," and tried to raise his head from the pillow.

She took her cue from him.

"Yes, you are," she cooed. "Go sleepy-bye. Auntie'll tuck you in."

She arranged his blankets about his shoulders, patting and smoothing them down.

"Night-night," he said contentedly. "Kiss me night-night."

She touched his forehead with her finger tips.

"Ssh," she said, and bent down to him. The tall screen at the foot of the bed hid her from any one who might pass along the passage. She touched her lips to his forehead. "Night-night," she whispered.

He looked at her with a childish smile pouting his lips. It hardened slowly into a pursed mouth of perplexity.

"Hallo, old man," he said. "Whore——"

He closed his eyes on a frown.

She was still blushing hotly when his regular breathing showed her that he had fallen into a quiet slumber.

* * * * * *

He was sitting in his arm-chair taking a sun bath at a window that looked out on the dazzling white of melting snow. His visitors had just left him, at his doctor's orders. He was waiting for the return of "Nurse Blakely," with an impatience which he might have recognised as longing, if his physical weakness had not disguised affection in him as an irritable lack of what he wished to have. She came in light-footed.

He crowed a feeble "Ah-ha! Did you hear what the doctor said?"

"What did he say?"

She arranged his pillows to ease the strain on a weak back. He was grateful for that, and his gratitude shone in his smile.

"I'm to be humoured, the doctor said; I'm to have my own way in everything."

"Are you?" she said, avoiding his eyes. You certainly had your own way about the fruit."

He laughed now at the folly that had kept him a happy prisoner in the hospital for the past nine weeks. "That fruit!" he said; "that was the most delicious—the most—— Do you know, Nurse Blakely, I thought those peaches would kill me, but I was dying for something to eat—and I just took them." She did not reply. "A man's a fool when he has a fever, isn't he?" he added, with apologetic seriousness.

"Only then?" she retorted with obstinate flippancy.

She was busying herself about the room. He was watching her every movement with an eye of invalid tenderness.

"Oh, I say," he protested, "you don't make any allowance for a fellow being ill!"

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"Oh, you're well on the way to health," she said. "We'll soon have you back to your friends——"

"Nurse," he said, "you're the best friend I ever had—or want to have."

Her cloistered loneliness rose on her in a surge of bitterness.

"Wait till you've been away from here about a month. One feels very dependent and—and affectionate when one is ill. It soon wears off."

"That's the way you always talk," he said moodily. Then, brightening, "I'll report you to the doctor. You're not humouring me."

She did not answer. She smiled, having warded off the danger which his milder manner had warned her of. She seated herself in a chair and took up a book which she had put down on the table when his visitors had entered.

"What's that?" he demanded peevishly. "What are you reading?"

"Don'ts," she answered laconically.

"Don'ts?"

"'One Hundred Don'ts for Nurses,'" she read from the cover. "Things we are not to do."

"Well, don't worry. Your sins have been all of omission. It's the things you have not done——"

She smiled serenely at the page.

"You might read it out, at least," he said,

"Let me see." She turned the pages. "I think that is probably included in the prohibitions: Don't let others know the secrets of the profession."

He clutched the arms of the chair.

"You're teasing me. Let me read that book or I'll get up."

She laughed and passed it to him. He began to read:

"Don't sit in a rocking chair and rock while resting." "Don't injure the furniture in any way, and be careful of all fancy decorations." He looked about him. "The wreckage has been appalling in this palatial apartment." He read again. "Well, great Eli!" he cried, and looked up at her. "Why, it was you!"

"What was?"

"Come here, please."

She went to him. He pointed with a thin finger to an accusing "Don't kiss your patient."

She flushed under her dainty Swiss cap.

"Not even delirious patients?" he inquired.

She turned her back on him and went towards the window.

"Not even those who have an illumination of reason?" he persisted. She could find nothing to say. "Do you know," he said, "I've been puzzling over it ever since. It was just before I fell asleep and woke up to my senses again. At first I thought it was my aunt who brought me up, and then suddenly I thought it was an old chum of mine at college. You look very like him. Why, your names are the same. Was Jim Blakely a relative of yours? He was drowned——"

She turned on him with a cry of—

"Jim—Jim was my—my dearest brother."

"Good Heavens," he gasped, and tried to rise. He sank back weakly in his chair and sat there staring at her. "What a chump I am," he said at last. "So you're little Marjorie." He remembered Jim's picture of her in his den. "How proud he was of you." The thought of her position there then came to him in a shameful contrast. "What a brute I've been," he said, "and what an angel you've been here. To let you wait on me hand and foot like that."

Her back was to him. She stood looking out of the window. Her hand was within his reach, and he took it.

"Do you think," he said, "being Jim's chum, you could ——" He touched his lips to the palm of her hand—"forgive me? Could you?" She tried to free her fingers. "Take care," he warned, "the doctor said I was to be humoured."

She laughed, and that weakened her defences. He caught her other hand.

"You're a brick, Marjorie," he said.

"Let me go," she said sobbing. "I—I want to wipe my eyes, you silly."

Her tone was itself a surrender. He lay back and smiled with content into her wet eyes. For he had won.

J. M. R.

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

British and Irish Rivers.

FIRST PRIZE - £10. SECOND PRIZE - £2.
THIRD to SIXTH PRIZES - £1 each.

Below will be found fifteen sets of words, each set describing the name of a river in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

NOTE THESE FACTS.

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until one more list has appeared.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

THIRD LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:

To flow gently..... Ouse.

31. A river dam	**31**	.....
32. Balanced cargo	**32**	.....
33. Dread	**33**	.....
34. A towering flight	**34**	.....
35. Excommunication outwitted	**35**	.....
36. Pale viper	**36**	.....
37. To merit by labour	**37**	.....
38. A mound of large stones laid in the sea before a port, for protection	**38**	.....
39. To make neat	**39**	.....
40. The third consonant	**40**	.....
41. Lean on	**41**	.....
42. A tree esteemed for its stateliness	**42**	.....
43. To reclaim	**43**	.....
44. Husks of ground corn	**44**	.....
45. To draw with the mouth	**45**	.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

The result of the First Name-Hunting Competition will be published next week.

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A Modern 'Portia.'

The Story of a Woman's Wit.

CHAPTER I.
Mr. Laban Spencer's Opportunity.

"Now, you're quite sure, Evans, that your information is correct? That this fine gentleman—this Honourable Rollo Middleton, to wit—is really cornered for coin?"

"Yes, sir. It seems that he's been dabbling in stocks and shares, and has got badly nipped. I understand that he's looking round for accommodation. Fisher—Slater—Mendel—he's tried 'em all, but none of 'em 'll touch him. Why?—because they all know that Lord Minsterley has the absolute free willing of his money, and (so they say that ought to know) is not over sweet on his first-born, the Honourable Rollo, owing to the young man's obstinacy in the matter of Ivy Meade."

"The actress?"

"Yes."

"What has she to do with young Middleton?"

"Do you mean to say, sir, that you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Why, that he's over head and ears in love with her, and she with him. The old lord has come to hear of it, and is using this monetary disaster of his son's as a lever to bend him to the parental will."

"And the youngster—won't budge, I suppose, from his position?"

"Not an inch! He defies his father, and threatens immediate marriage with his sweetheart."

"He's a chip of the old block, then, for if I don't mistake, the Baron himself ran away with his wife."

"That's right, sir, and people are saying that the son is but following in the father's footsteps."

"I hope he will, Evans; I hope he will. I want him to, and it's you that have got to keep him to the sticking-point!"

"Me, sir!" cried Evans, in unhappy amazement. "What can I do?"

"Much. You don't appear to comprehend my drift."

"No, Mr. Spencer, I can't say that I do."

"You can't? Don't you remember how this young blue-blooded puppy has, up to now, persistently declined my overtures, business, as well as social. Can't you call to mind how, only last summer in this very room, he insulted me! Me, Laban Spencer—who, if I chose, could buy up, twice over, his father's miserable acres, and that without turning a financial hair.

"It wasn't his own bill he had come about, I know, but that scoundrel, Piffler's, of the Guards Yes, I hate him! because he would have no business dealings with me. Said that money-lenders were the bane of Society, and should not be suffered to exist within a mile of honest men. Yes, I tell you, I hate him! and will make him smart, so sure as my name is Laban Spencer!"

Both men carried the proof of their Semitic origin in their faces. True, the Jew sought to hide itself under Gentile style and title, but it was a sorry disguise, and deceived nobody.

The scene of the conversation was the private den of a pretentious suite of offices in a certain street in Piccadilly. "Spencer's" (popularly known as the "Spider's Web") was as familiar to West End impecuniosity as was its own lack of the golden "medium." The den of the "smart" money-lender, with its setting of ormolu morocco and Turkey pile, had heard related within its four walls more "Society" secrets, more compromising revelations of ruinous prodigality, than any place of its size in London, or, indeed, the Kingdom.

It had ever been Laban Spencer's desire to get Lord Minsterley's son into his financial mesh, but Rollo Middleton hated and despised the wily Israelite, and refused response of any kind to every proffer of friendly accommodation.

The man was ambitious for social status, and his scheme to secure it was as undoubtedly original as it was daringly unscrupulous.

A widower, he looked to his only child and daughter, Miriam, as to the one who should enable him to take his place among the "great."

With this end in view he had educated her; with this end in view he had endeavoured to prime her with that which passed with him for "Society" lore and tradition.

That he had not succeeded in this to his complete satisfaction was a source of almost savage irritation with him, with the result that the girl's life became a burden and a shame to her.

Miriam Spencer was not fair, as men count fairness. Short of stature, swarthy, and with a painful hesitancy of speech and manner, she possessed no personal attraction for the average man. She had been referred to among the money-lender's clients as "Spencer's Pill," inasmuch as it was well-known that he could gild it with more than the usual money-in-plenty.

That she was womanly and sweet-tempered went for nothing, alike with father and clients, seeing that such things have no appreciable market value.

Strange to say, Laban Spencer was inclined, with all his eager greediness for even standing-room in the "charmed circle," to be over nice in the selection of a husband for his daughter, and a sharer of the good things attached to the skirt of the prospective bride.

Many there were who would complacently, and even joyfully have swallowed the "pill," for the sake of the gold therewith. But Laban would have none of them. There was one man, above all others the most unlikely and unapproachable, upon whom he had set his apology for a heart.

It was the day when Rollo Middleton was seeking to negotiate further renewal for his craven friend Piffler's bill, that Laban Spencer, thinking the time favourable, hinted his desires to his visitor.

"Sir!" said the young man, in indignant reply to the other's unblushing proposal for an amicable exchange of commodities.

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"I pity your daughter—pity her from my heart. It so happens that I have heard of her, and, let me tell you, in such a way as makes me to have the truest admiration of, and respect for her. She herself would be the last one to indorse such a confessedly huckstering proposal as yours.

"Your money is never going to buy you into a class for which you are no more fit by nature than is the man who buys my cast-off coat at the area-gate."

"You are rude, sir! and—and I refuse to renew Lieutenant Piffler's bill. You may tell him so; and that I shall let the law take its course."

"Ah! in that case," rejoined Rollo Middleton, with cutting emphasis, "I will take up the paper myself, so, if you will hand me over the bill, I will give you my cheque."

It was then that Laban Spencer's visitor gave vent to his somewhat forcible opinions with regard to money-mongers and their ways.

"Very well, sir! Very well! You have seen fit to flout me, not only personally, but in my business capacity. Some day you may need my good offices. May come crawling and whining for—for old Laban's shekels. Well, we shall see! we shall see!"

"I will take your word for it, Mr. Spencer, but you may as assuredly take mine—that of my own free willl I shall never come to you for even so much as a brass farthing. Good morning!"

That was a year ago; and it was not to be wondered at, knowing the man, that Laban Spencer's fingers itched to avail himself of the opportunity for revenge, now, as he deemed, within his reach.

It was quite true that Rollo Middleton was, financially speaking, in sore straits. It was equally true that his father, unable to shake his son's determination to marry Ivy Meade on a paltry income of four hundred a year, had issued instructions to his solicitors to prepare a new will, absolutely disinheriting the young man.

Then it was that a mysterious bill cropped up—£5,000, face value—purporting to be accepted by Rollo Middleton in favour of Alwyn Piffler, and held by Laban Spencer as security for £4,750 advanced to the drawer.

The first Middleton heard of it was from the solicitor who was conducting his case in bankruptcy; said solicitor, Frank Meade, being the brother of the leading lady at the Odeon.

"But, my dear fellow, it's a fraud! Why, I've only put my hand to paper of that sort once in my life, and I redeemed the bill—for £500—on July 17th last year."

"You're sure of that?"

"Sure of it! Mr. Spencer and I have, each of us, good

"Very well, sir! some day you may come crawling and whining for—for old Laban's shekels."

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reason, I think, for being absolutely certain on the point. I ventured, on the occasion of redemption, to express myself—well—not over politely, perhaps, with regard to that gentleman's methods and profession generally. I don't fancy that he can have forgotten the circumstance; it must, therefore, help him to remember the monetary transaction. It's odd, though, that this bogus bill—for it is a bogus bill—should bear another nought, isn't it?"

"Another nought! I don't quite follow you."

"Why, Piffler's bill was for £500. This precious document, you say, is for £5,000, the adding of a nought is easy—to some people—and, to my shame, I confess to having torn up, without looking at it, the paper Spencer handed to me."

"Then you think——?"

"That the old rascal passed off upon me a duplicate, which duplicate I destroyed, and threw into his own waste-paper basket. The original bill he has kept, altered, and has now produced, to hamper and disgrace me at a moment when, so to speak, I can't turn in my own length."

"By Jove!" cried the young lawyer, looking admiringly at his client and friend. "It's just possible!"

"It's more—it's as surely certain as that you are sitting where you are."

"Well, I'll see what I can find out. Are you going to the *première* of the *Merchant of Venice* to-night at the Odeon?"

"Do you ask! Ivy declared this morning, when I saw her for a moment at the theatre, that she wouldn't be able to get through unless she knew I was there. That's the only thing that is taking me, for this new enemy to fight, in the shape of old Spencer and his spurious bill, has taken all the steam out of me. Here! hold a moment! Meade! I verily believe we can get to the bottom of this business."

"Yes! How?"

"You know—no one better—that Ivy has made a friend of old Laban's daughter, Miriam. The girl is a good girl, and would lay down her life almost for Ivy; it may not be very good form, and I hate doing it, but after the show to-night I will ask Ivy to find out from her, if possible, anything that may help us in getting at the truth."

"As you say, Middleton, it's—well—a bit shady—trying to get at the father through his child."

"So it is, Frank, so it is! and I won't do it. At all events I'll wait till I've consulted Ivy to-night after her triumph."

CHAPTER II.

The Interval Between the Acts.

The whole playgoing world was literally agog with excited anticipation.

The new Portia! Nothing else theatrical had been talked of for weeks.

So truly representative an audience is rarely to be found assembled within the walls of a theatre, as that which on the first night of the revival of *The Merchant of Venice*, filled every available nook and corner of the big house off the Strand.

In the stalls sat Rollo Middleton, anxious-eyed, and worried of look, as befitted a man who, in the natural course of events, would soon take his degree in the Debtor's University, the Bankruptcy Court.

By his side sat his friend and solicitor, Frank Meade; the brother as keenly interested in his sister's performance as the man who loved her beyond all else in the world.

A certain amount of romance must of necessity attach to every union, or contemplated union, between the "stage" and "Society"; but, apart from real, true, simple-hearted devotion on both sides, there was nothing ultra-romantic about the love-story of Rollo Middleton and Ivy Meade.

An old 'Varsity chum of her brother's, his introduction to her took place in the most every-day, conventional way, dating, indeed, from a period long antecedent to her entrance upon her professional career.

Like many another man, Rollo disliked the idea of the woman of his choice exhibiting herself to even an admiring public at so much a head. But Ivy Meade's genius, her lofty appreciation of the actor's art, ultimately reconciled him to the inevitable, and he henceforth lived but to shield her from all that must circle round her in the pursuit of her calling.

Ivy Meade was not in any sense the typical professional actress. The slang of the stage she detested, and though tender-hearted and womanly to a degree, she resented any approach to that dangerous familiarity which is the bane of the theatrical life.

Most men called her "lovely," but it remained for Rollo Middleton to discover the intangible something, and to appropriate it. Her eyes were her crown and glory—big, lustrous, and brimming with intelligence, and the spirit of a pure and noble nature.

"Middleton!" said Frank Meade presently. "Do you see who is in that box on the first tier—second from the stage?"

The young man raised his glasses, and lowered them again in an instant, without speaking.

"Well?" queried the other.

"Yes, I see. Laban Spencer and his daughter."

"Look!" whispered the lawyer hurriedly. "An attendant is giving the girl a note. Ivy has sent round for her—yes! there she goes!"

Rollo Middleton's only reply was to scribble a few words in pencil upon a leaf torn from his pocket-book, signal to a programme-seller, and give the note to her, with a coin.

"Ivy?" asked his friend.

"Yes."

"Thought so! You lovers are so uneasy, and as fidgety as—as captive Carnivora."

Directly the curtain was down upon the second act, Middleton rose from his seat.

"May be back, or—may not," he said to Frank Meade. "If I'm not with you before the commencement of the last interval, come on to my rooms after you've seen Ivy home, and wait for me."

He was well-known in and about the theatre, and passed round without let or hindrance to the back of the stage.

The leading lady's accommodation consisted of an inner dressing-room, opening out into a sort of boudoir, the latter furnished with a piano, and with feminine knick-knacks of every description.

The door of this room was wide open, and seeing no one there Middleton entered and closed the door.

As he did so, the inner door opened slowly and Miriam Spencer came through and greeted him.

"Mr. Middleton—will you mind—very much—if I see you during this interval instead of Ivy?"

"No—I—of course! but is anything the matter?"

"The matter! You mean with Ivy? No, nothing is the matter with her."

"Then it is you who are in trouble! I am sure that it is so! What is it, Miss Spencer? If there is anything in my power that will help you, just tell me."

"Mr. Middleton, I have only a few moments during this interval in which to explain myself. Ivy will see you—to-morrow morning at half-past ten by the Queen's statue in Kensington Gardens."

"To-morrow! Shall I not see her to-night—now?"

"She bids me say—no; and for reasons that you will, later on, be the first to recognise as being good and sufficient. Won't you be seated?

"In the first place," the young girl went on, her voice taking a sadness of tone that was inexpressibly touching. "I am speaking to you now as—as Miss Meade's confidential companion."

"Her what? Why, your father waits your return in front."

"Yes, yes—I know! but, nevertheless, he will leave the house without me."

"It is a riddle."

"The answer to which can best be given by my telling what I have to tell in my own way."

"One moment, Miss Spencer. Has Ivy said anything to you—given you any message from me?"

"No; for I anticipated her. Mr. Middleton, to-morrow morning you are to be examined in Carey Street, are you not?"

"I believe so."

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"And you have information that a certain bill for £5,000, bearing your signature, will then be produced as an after-proof, should you succeed in arranging with the schedule creditors for a satisfactory composition, and a consequent annulling of the bankruptcy proceedings."

"Yes, quite correct," replied Rollo, curiously amused at the young girl's business-like way of putting things.

"You also know, I think, that—that this new creditor is Laban Spencer, my father?"

"Yes, I know that; and, for your sake, I am heartily grieved."

"It is kind of you so say so, and I know your sympathy to be sincere; but let it pass, please; my trouble is my own, and as such, I will bear it—alone."

"Go on, please."

"Now, this—this bill; do you know of it, acknowledge it to be yours?"

"No, Miss Spencer, I most certainly do not."

"I am quite aware that you do not, though I asked you the question."

"Then why—who——?"

"Why—I don't exactly know; but who—who converted the five hundred pound bill into the five thousand pound one? Who fabricated the spurious copy of the original, palmed off upon you on July 17th last year? I can gratify your curiosity on those points! Oh, yes—I can tell you that!"

She ended with a semi-hysterical sob, and Rollo Middleton pitied her from the bottom of his heart.

"Don't tell me," he said quietly, "if it will hurt you."

"But I must. You will never guess who did those things I speak of—but who, thank heaven! is not responsible for the wickedness ot them."

"My dear Miss Spencer, even if it were your—your——"

"My father! no, he did not do it; and yet, he is responsible! I—his daughter—say so, because I—his daughter—fabricated that false bill! I—added four thousand five hundred pounds to the value of the real bill!"

"Miss Spencer! You! You are ill—or dreaming!"

"No; I am well, and—awake." Then she went on with strangely sudden calmness.

"The man Evans, my father's confidential clerk, is an expert hypnotist. I am, alas! what is called a good subject. At what I now know to be my father's instigation, Evans threw me into the hypnotic state, compelling me, while under his influence, to do the things I have told you of."

"The scoundrel! but where is he?"

"He absconded this morning. Why, I do not know, for, until a quarter of an hour ago, when I sent a note to my father, I have said nothing to anyone."

"He must be found!"

"He must! and that, Mr. Middleton, is your task, with the help of Mr. Meade."

"I will go back to him at once."

"No, no! please do not! Do not enter the front of the house again. I have strong reasons for asking this. Can you see Mr. Meade at your rooms to-night?"

"Yes; I have arranged to meet him there about midnight."

"Then do so, and discuss with him the best way of securing, as speedily as possible, the person of Richard Evans. Miss Meade and I have a plan in another direction, about which you will hear to——"

"Rollo!"

He turned sharply at the salutation to meet the presence of as gracious a Portia as ever trod boards.

"I couldn't let you go without a word," she said, putting both her shapely little hands into his extended big ones.

"I oughtn't to be talking to you now," she went on, "for the coming 'trial scene' is haunting me."

"Never mind that, dear," he said. "Do not speak a word; it is good just to look at you, and to hold your hands."

"Is it? Has Miriam told you?"

"Yes. And I can't realise it even now."

"Don't try to do so, dear; but if you are to play up to me in a little drama I have in rehearsal for to-morrow, follow Miriam's advice, and, if possible, find the man Evans."

"I am afraid it is more easily said than done."

"Difficult, yes! And now, I shall be called in a couple of minutes. To-morrow morning, at ten in the Gardens."

He kissed her, and made for the door. Then something impelled him to turn and say to Miriam: "I won't hold you to this, if it hurts you—it is your father, you know."

"That is past," she answered him. "I am no man's

"I—his daughter—fabricated that false bill!"

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A bubbling rush of incoherent sound issuing from his ashen lips, Laban Spencer fell forward over the witness-box rail.

daughter. I am just Miss Meade's companion, and—forgive me, please—your friend!"

CHAPTER III.
"A Daniel Come to Judgment."

Upon the next morning after the revival of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Odeon, Ivy Meade's Portia was the dominant subject in literary and artistic circles, and, indeed, with men generally.

When, therefore, it was rumoured in the City about midday, that the famous actress was in the neighbourhood of the Law Courts; was, in fact, at that very moment in the stuffy atmosphere of the Bankruptcy Court in Carey Street, excuses galore for special leave of absence were hatched up, and before half-past one the court was crammed to overflowing point by every clerkly male who could get his nose in.

Rollo Middleton and Ivy Meade had met as arranged in Kensington Gardens, but even then the latter would not divulge the secret of her plan with regard to Rollo's affairs.

It was, therefore, more than a surprise to him to find, on reaching Carey Street, that Ivy, in company with Miriam Spencer, was comfortably seated near to the witness-box.

He was about to make his way across the court to her, but refrained in response to a pretty little repelling gesture. This she tempered with a smile that almost reconciled him to doing her bidding.

"I don't see Laban Spencer here," said Frank Meade to his client. "I wonder how he means to play the game!"

"Well, he can't play it at all, I take it, if he does not show up," replied Rollo.

"That's what I mean. But—confound it, there he is! just coming in now! Old Carter with him, too—the rankest old rascal on the Rolls. With Evans unfindable, I'm fairly beaten as to what we're going to do. You object—and I think rightly—to my calling Miriam Spencer. She's our only card, and it would be disgracefully ungenerous to play her."

"Of course that's understood."

It did not take long for the Schedule creditors to agree to a composition of ten shillings in the pound, and the Registrar was about to declare the annulment of the bankruptcy proceedings, when the bolt fell.

"I, sir," said Mr. Sam Carter (of Carter and Wells, solicitors), rising and addressing the Registrar, "I have a claim to mention, unscheduled owing to——"

"Whom do you represent, Mr. Carter?" asked the Registrar.

"My client, Mr. Laban Spencer."

"'Um!" remarked the Registrar drily. "Go on, sir."

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"I produce, and put in as a proof of claim, a bill of exchange for the sum of five thousand pounds, and accepted by the Honourable Rollo Middleton."

"This is rather unusual, Mr. Carter. Why was the claim not made before?"

"I was about to explain, sir, that we were not duly advised of the course Mr. Middleton's affairs have taken."

"That, sir, is no excuse at all, and I am not disposed to help you out of any difficulty you may find yourself in through failure to act at the proper moment."

The bill had been passed up to the Registrar, who, after glancing at it, was about to repass it down to the clerk below him.

"One moment!"

It was a lady's voice that rang clearly and self-possessed through the court, as Ivy Meade stood up and faced the bench.

"Madam, who are you? I am afraid I cannot hear you."

"Kindly postpone that decision until Mr. Laban Spencer himself has from that box sworn upon his oath that that bill is a genuine bill, that the signature of Mr. Middleton is also genuine, and that the amount appearing upon the bill ought to be five thousand pounds and not five hundred."

"This is most extraordinary and irregular; what is that you suggest, madam? But, first, what is your name?"

"Ivy Meade, and—and I am a personal friend of Mr. Middleton's."

"Miss Meade, you honour this court by speaking in it. Tell me, please, what do you suggest in connection with this bill?"

"Before I answer, I should like to ask you, sir, in the first place, to retain possession of the document; and, secondly, to see that Laban Spencer does not leave this court before he has answered one or two questions I propose to put to him."

White to ghastliness, apprehension showing in every facial line and feature, the old moneylender stepped into the witness-box.

Sworn, he was addressed by the Registrar.

"Mr. Spencer, as it seems that there is something about this bill not quite that which you claim for it, I have decided to allow this lady to ask you a few questions, in the interests of truth and justice. Now, Miss Meade."

"Mr. Spencer," said Ivy, "did Mr. Rollo Middleton call upon you in the forenoon of the seventeenth of July last year, and redeem a bill for five hundred pounds, drawn by Lieutenant Piffler, and accepted by himself?"

"Yes—he did."

"Very good. Now, with regard to the bill for five thousand pounds which you now produce against Mr. Middleton's estate, when was that negotiated?"

"Two months ago to-day—the twentieth of September."

"Ah! then how comes it, that on that day you were not at your office—that you were not in London, but in Paris?"

"I was at my office. I have not been to Paris this year."

"No? Well, tell me this. Why did you on the fifteenth of July last year, and again on the eighteenth of September last, request your man Evans, a well-known hypnotic expert, to exert his influence over your daughter, Miriam, so that while in the hypnotic state, she might respond to his will, and on both occasions produce fac-simile copies of original documents."

"No—it is a lie!"

"Where is the man Evans now?"

"I do not know."

"Is it not a fact that he left London yesterday morning at your request?"

"No."

"Then you still adhere to your statement that this bill is a genuine bill, and that Mr. Middleton's signature as acceptor is genuine also?"

"Yes, I adhere to that statement."

"Then I will ask the Registrar to call Miriam Spencer."

What followed was almost melodramatic in intensity of situation.

Throwing up his hands; a bubbling rush of incoherent sounds issuing from his ashen lips, Laban Spencer fell forward over the witness-box rail.

Confusion reigned supreme.

The court was immediately cleared of all except those immediately concerned.

Three hours afterwards startling head lines appeared on all the newspaper contents bills.

"Sudden Death in Court
of
Laban Spencer, the Moneylender.
Scene in the Bankruptcy Court.
Ivy Meade Cross-Examines.
'Portia'
In Real Life."

* * * * *

City men talk of the Middleton bankruptcy sensation to this day, and of the bit of real drama played then on the Carey Street stage.

Of course it was a splendid advertisement for the Odeon; the business done being phenomenal.

Lord Minsterley is still unreconciled to his son, even though his son's wife is a woman whom playgoers worship, whom other women envy, and whom her husband adores.

Ralph Enderby.

A Paying Game.

Little Boy: "I saw you kiss sis, and if you don't give me sixpence I'll tell." Young Man: "Here's the tanner." Little Boy: "Thanks. That's £1 I've made this month."

Out of the Mouth of Babes.

Mother: "Bobby, come upstairs this instant and change your shoes and stockings." Bobby: "They isn't wet." Mother: "Indeed they are; just soaking. I can hear them 'sop, sop, sop' whenever you walk." Bobby: "That Sis and Mr. Nice-fellow in th' parlour."

Very Strict.

"Your friend Miss Blank seems a very strict teetotaler," said a man, commenting on a girl who had refused to eat plum-pudding with brandy sauce. "Strict doesn't express it," replied the girl's friend. "Why, don't you know she's that particular she won't heat her curling tongs over a spirit lamp?"

NEXT WEEK'S COVER OF "SHORT STORIES" WILL BE A REMARKABLE ONE.

A Lengthy Process.

Mr. Bingo: "We may as well talk over this question of getting the house painted." Mrs. Bingo: "But, my dear, it doesn't need to be painted for at least a year yet." Mr. Bingo: "True. But you have got to decide what colour you want."

A Sensible Girl.

He (timidly): "Now that we are engaged, I—I presume I may—may kiss you as much as I please, mayn't I?" She (encouragingly): "Yes, indeed. Make the most of your time, dear. There's no telling how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know."

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A Matter of Trust.

"WILL you trust me, Fanny?" he cried passionately, grasping her hand. "With all my heart, Augustus, with all my soul, with all myself," she whispered, nestling on his manly bosom. "Would that you were my tailor," he murmured to himself, and tenderly he took her in his arms.

Birdies Both.

"WHAT are the names of that newly-married couple in the next flat?" "Oh, we can't find out for a few weeks. Each one calls the other 'Birdie.'"

That Heartless Editor.

AMBITIOUS MAIDEN: "It's too bad. The editor sent my beautiful and pathetic story back without reading it." Fond Mother: "Dearie me! How do you know it?" Ambitious Maiden: "I've looked all through every page and there isn't a teardrop anywhere."

Hardly a Love Match.

MISS SMILAX: "And so Miss Passe and Mr. Gotnix really got married. Was it a love match?" Mary: "On the contrary, I should call it a hate match." Miss Smilax: "Why? I don't understand you." Mary: "Why, she hated to be an old maid, and he hated to be poor."

Hard to Satisfy.

MR. THRIFTY: "Doctor, I don't think much of that cough medicine of yours." Dr. Curem: "I am very sorry to hear that. What is the reason?" Thrifty: "Why, there is so much of it dead waste." Curem: "Dead waste!" Thrifty: "Yes; I hadn't taken more than a quarter of the bottle when my cough had gone, and there is the other three-quarters thrown away."

Knew How to Manage Him.

MRS. BRIGHTON (who wants a new hat very much): "I say, hubby, I've got to have a new dress. Don't you see how shabby this one is getting?" Mr. Brighton (very much frightened): "A new dress! That will never do. Money is very scarce. If you had said you wanted a new hat I would not have objected, but a new dress is out of the question." Mrs. Brighton: "All right, I suppose I shall have to be satisfied with a hat, but I can't help being a little disappointed."

Cautious This Time.

MAUDE: "George, I don't think I ought to marry you, for I don't believe you love me one bit." George (ardently): "Why, my darling, I am passionately, desperately, madly in love with you. I worship the very——" Maude: "You talk well enough, George, but those letters you wrote to me when away were so cold and distant they froze my heart. One would think you were writing to your washerwoman about her bill." George (slowly): "Maude, I—was—engaged—to—a—girl—once—before, and when she sued me for breach of promise all my letters to her were—read—in—open—court."

His Mission in Life.

"MY wife is a lecturer and I am an entertainer," said Hobbs. "Indeed, I knew your wife appeared in public, but I did not know that you ever did." "Oh, I don't I stay at home and entertain the baby."

Still Leading.

JAWKINS: "How's Henpeck getting on since his marriage? He used to vow that no woman could ever get ahead of him." Hagg: "Oh, he's still leading, I suppose; but she's behind—holding the reins."

Good Enough for Him.

THE LADY: "Jack, why don't you write a book, or paint a picture, or do something clever?" The Gentleman: "Because I selected a millionaire for a father, and I think that was clever enough to last a lifetime."

Taken at His Word.

HE (after marriage): "What! you have no fortune? You said over and over again that you were afraid someone would marry you for your money." She: "Yes, and you said over and over again that you would be happy with me if I hadn't a farthing. Well, I haven't a farthing."

After Five Years.

HE (five years after): "All this gush about love is extremely silly. Wherever did this stupid book come from? I must say the person who selected it showed a very insipid taste." She (quietly): "It's the book you gave me during our honeymoon, John; we read it eleven times the first week we had it." (Prolonged silence.)

Still Wondering.

"YOU say you want to marry my daughter. Have you spoken to her?" "Yes, sir," replied the young man, "and have gained her consent." "Well, if she has said 'Yes,' that settles it. Anything I might say or do wouldn't have the slightest influence." Then the young man went home and wondered if he was not too young to marry such a girl.

Wrote for Cash Only.

MR. RHAPSODIE (to Miss De Rhyme): "I've longed to meet you for some time, Miss De Rhyme; I dote on poets. They tell me you write poetry?" Miss De Rhyme: "Yes, I do." Mr. Rhapsodie: "How nice. Where do you publish your poems?" Miss De Rhyme: "In the newspapers and magazines." Mr. Rhapsodie: "Ah! and what subject does your muse love best?" Miss De Rhyme: "Oh! any patent medicine or soap, or perfume—anything that produces the hard cash." Mr. Rhapsodie faints.

Excusable.

A YOUNG man had met a girl in a lonely place and forcibly kissed her. She was terribly indignant, and had him arrested. She gave an account in the witness-box of how he gazed at her intently, and then, suddenly throwing his arms round her, imprinted a kiss upon her lips. The prisoner made no defence, and the jury was expected to promptly convict him of assault. They returned to the court-room. "The ju-ju-jury w-w-would like to ask the young lady two questions," the foreman said. The judge consented and she went on the stand. "D-d-did you wear that dress that you've g-g-got on now?" "Yes, sir," was the demure reply. "And w-w-was your ha-ha-hair c-c-curled like that?" "Yes, sir." "Then, your lordship, we acquit the p-p-risoner on the ground of emo-mo-tional insanity."

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TOO MUCH BUSINESS.

The author and manager were going over the play together, strengthening its weak points, and getting it into shape for presentation.

"I don't think," said the latter, when pressed for an opinion, "that the stage directions are quite explicit enough. I think it would be a good idea to write in the 'business' a little more fully."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted the author. "What in particular would you suggest?"

"Well, in the first act, where the heroine comes romping on the stage, I would have her father put his arms round her and kiss her."

"Do you think that is necessary?"

"Well, yes. It will show his love for her, and make his grief seem more intense when she runs away with the hero."

"All right; I'll do it. What next?"

"When the hero makes love to her, and she seems undecided, his arm should quietly steal round her waist."

"Ought I to write that in?"

"Certainly. All the business should be written in."

The author said, "Very well. I'll attend to it. Anything more?"

"Yes. Her brother would treat her most affectionately. She's supposed to be a great favourite of his, you know, and when he gets home on his furlough this greeting should be most loving—kisses and all that. That will make the situation stronger when he starts out to kill the man who has run away with his beloved sister."

"Meaning the hero."

"Yes; and when she agrees to elope with the hero, she should throw herself into his arms, and he should fairly smother her with kisses. It will make a beautiful picture. A pretty woman throwing aside all reserve and surrendering herself to her gallant, noble lover."

The author pushed away the manuscript and asked, with suppressed emotion:

"Any more 'effective' business for this heroine?"

"Oh, yes. When the grand reconciliation comes, and the hero is found to be a good man, and all ends happily——"

"I draw the line there!" exclaimed the author, fiercely. "Do you realise that the heroine is to be played by my wife? Do you think I'm going to write out a license in this manuscript for every man in the case to fold her in his arms and kiss her? No, sir, I won't do it! We'll lop out some of this 'business,' or the heroine will be indisposed on the opening night."

O. P. W.

IF YOU'VE FAILED

in business, it's perhaps because you have taken up the wrong work. You should ascertain from an unbiassed person the real bent of your mind, and to do this you should send a specimen of your handwriting to *RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.*, inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

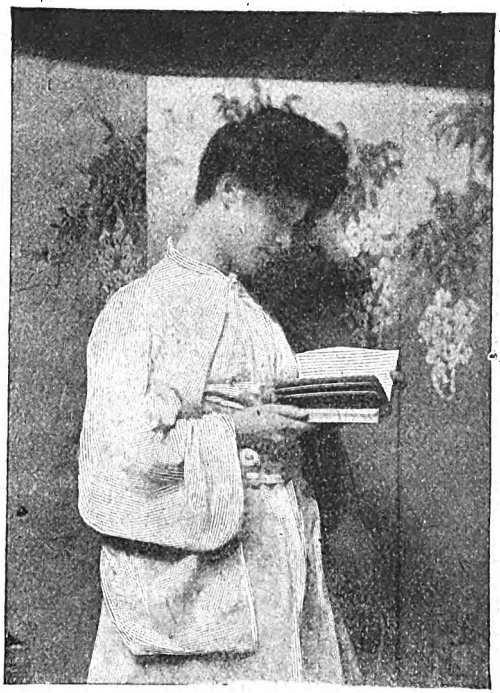
The Lady's Magazine for May is a number which should not be missed, for with this number begins quite a new departure. The magazine is very much enlarged, it is printed throughout on the best paper, in good type, and with the very best blocks.

The reason for this enlargement is to improve the Magazine, and to make it of more practical use to readers. Had it not been enlarged we should have had to sacrifice some of the features which are now so popular with its regular readers.

There will be a large section devoted to stories and storyettes; there will be a most excellent serial, and in addition to the ordinary articles there will be the following regular features:

Health and Beauty, Mothers and Children, Stage Favourites, Etiquette, Home and Table Decoration, Dress and Fashion, Playtime, Law and the Lady, The House Beautiful, Servants, Girl's Interests, Cookery, Women's Employment, Gardening, and Toilet.

Now, just a word about the lady who is writing the present serial, of which the first part appears in the May number and is concluded in June. Miss Onoto Watanna is a



charming Japanese girl (only in her twenty-third year). She was born in the flowery land of the chrysanthemum, her father an Englishman in the Consular Service and her mother a Japanese. She began writing at the age of fifteen, and has since that time found a public only too ready to read everything that comes from her pen.

The story she has written for The Lady's Magazine is the daintiest thing possible, and everyone who reads it will fall in love with Yuki, the little Japanese heroine.

Answers to Correspondents will appear in The Lady's Magazine, and every letter received will be answered, providing a stamped addressed envelope is inclosed. The Editress is only too glad to give information on any subject, and will welcome letters from her readers.

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IN THE TOP GALLERY.

A Casual Meeting and its Consequences.

MAX DOURKARD knew the dirty streets of London, knew its smoke-begrimed sky, knew its cheap lodging-houses, and, in fact, most of its "seamy side." He also was intimately acquainted with the garden implement department of a great business house, because he was engaged there six days of the week.

On Sundays he read the paper, ate a little more than usual, and took a lonely walk in the afternoon. He had an idea that everyone was not leading that sort of a life. There was a look on some of the faces that he met which indicated that there was more in existence than he had yet discovered. So far as he was concerned, the world was rather a plain place. There were moments, of course, when it was better, as, for example, when a band came playing down the street, or when the day was bright, or when he met a beautiful girl, or when the streets were all gay for a festival, or when he saw a crowd of people pouring out of a great church. But the band passed in a moment and was gone; he could not stay away from his task to enjoy the beautiful day; the lovely girl did not look at him, in the streets no one spoke to him, and he had not the soul's courage needed to go with the throng and worship in the church.

On Saturday night he left the office too late to go "home" for his dinner, so he got a little meal at a shabby restaurant, and wandered along the street looking at the crowds. He thought he would wander towards the West End and stare at the people in the clubs and hotel windows, and at the ladies going in to the opera. The last diversion proved the most engaging, and he almost gasped with wonder at the visions he got of graceful forms in their perfumed wrappings, as they stepped from their carriages and hastened through the theatre's swinging doors. Suddenly he was seized with a bold idea. He marched to the ticket window. He asked for a ticket. It did not seem possible that it was he who had done it, but the next thing he knew, he was walking up flight after flight of stairs, and after climbing what seemed to be an astonishing length of time he found himself in a little square iron balcony fairly overhanging a part of the audience—an audience made up, apparently, of midgets, judging from their appearance as he looked down upon them.

It was quite dusky where he sat, but he was able to make out the faces about him. They were not just the sort he had expected to see. He had been in high galleries before, but he had never seen in such a place the delicate, gentle faces he saw about him there. He was not experienced, but he knew these people instinctively for students of music, or young college men, or true music-lovers. An old man with long, venerable locks sat in front of him; on one side was a young man with a brow that was almost too lofty, and long, white, nervous hands, which, when the music began, seemed to involuntarily play the theme upon an imaginary piano. The seat on the other side of Max was vacant for a time, but finally it was occupied by a young girl, who was accompanied by a boy several years younger than herself. She took off her little felt hat and put it in her lap, revealing a head of auburn curls, and she drew off her shabby gloves and her little jacket, and adjusted herself comfortably. Then she looked about her smilingly, unfolded her programme, and bent herself to its study. Little exclamations of pleasure burst from her.

"It's just the cast I wanted," she said to her companion, who was evidently her brother. "It is going to be a great night, Tom."

Tom nodded, moved a little closer to his sister, and they sat still as statues while the wild, elate overture of the *Valkyrie* burst upon them. Max was bewildered. For a moment he seemed to recoil from this tumult of sound, as a timid swimmer might from a vast inrolling line of surf. Then his soul struggled up to meet the waves of harmony, though at times they seemed almost to beat him down. And at last the curtain rose and the strange mythical music-play began.

Max did not understand. The tongue was that his mother had taught him first, and the words came to his comprehension but not the sense of the story. He emitted a sigh of dismay. The young girl next him heard it. She looked at him quickly, smiled, and looked away again. But between the acts he was to be unexpectedly enlightened.

"Is this the first time you have seen this opera?" she asked brightly of him.

"It is the first time I ever saw any opera. I don't understand it very well."

"No? I didn't either at first, but now I love it more than anything I know of. It seems like another world than that I have to live in at other times. Would you like me to tell you the story of the *Valkyrie?*"

It seemed a century since anyone had spoken to him as kindly as this girl was doing. She had a pleasant face, with large, red-brown eyes, and a long droop to her lashes.

"I wish you would tell me the story," he said. But he had no idea that it was going to be such a beautiful story, or told in such a delicately modulated voice as it was. The relation of the tale seemed almost as enchanting to him as the music that followed. The girl with the glowing eyes called his attention to the different motives as they glimmered out of the fabric of the music. Under her tuition, what had at first appeared to be a marvellous confusion of wonderful sounds began to take on a majestic coherence—it was a new world but an ordered one. It seemed to Max as he listened that the loneliness and littleness of his life slipped away from him, as the skin of a serpent is sloughed off with the new season. He stood attired in new glittering garments of knowledge and joy.

"You must come on Monday night," said the girl at parting. "It is to be *Faust*, you know, and that story means even more than this. It seems to me everybody has a bit of *Faust* in him. I think it is one of the greatest stories in all the world."

"You know a great deal," said Max. "I don't see how you could have learned so much when you are—are so young!"

"I know about the things I love, but some things I cannot and will not learn. You ought to know my mother. She knows much."

"I wish I might see your mother," said Max, wistfully. "I have no mother."

"Haven't you?" asked the girl, sympathetically. "My mother is coming on Monday night, and perhaps—perhaps she might ask you home, you know."

"Oh!" cried poor Max with perfect naïvete, "I wish she would."

And shortly afterwards he departed for his lonely home.

* * * * *

It was Monday night, work for the day was finished and Max, trembling with subdued excitement, was hurrying towards the opera-house. He had never before known a Sunday to seem so long in passing, but now the longed-for moment was at hand. He eagerly scanned the audience, but they were not there. Yes, they had just arrived and she—she was smiling with pleasure. That evening he paid his first visit to her home, but it was by no means his last. Life is now a thing altogether different to him and his days of loneliness are now reckoned as days that are no more.

H. Parker.

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BANKS'S TELEPHONE.

"Alfred, my dear," said Mrs. Banks, as they sat at breakfast one morning, "I do wish you would get a telephone fitted up in the house, and I could speak to you at any time when you are in your office. Don't you think now that it would be just lovely?"

Alfred was not quite convinced as to its loveliness, but he meekly assented, on the principle that it would have to be done in the end since Mrs. B. had set her mind on it. Accordingly one morning some workmen came in, and the telephone was fitted up.

For the next few days poor Banks had very little peace. When he was very busy and pondering deeply over some intricate subject that telephone bell was sure to ring, and when he had rung back and adjusted the apparatus he would hear something like this, "Alfred, dear, aren't you glad you have got the telephone? It is working beautifully. I've just been over to Mrs. Fitzjohn's and she hasn't got one, and didn't I crow over her." Whereupon Alfred would mutter something (outside the instrument) not fit for the ears of Mrs. Banks.

This sort of thing went on for about a week, Banks getting thinner and more absent-minded as the days went on. But telephones are ticklish things sometimes, as the sequel will show.

One morning while Banks was having an interview with his friend Berryson, the telephone bell rang violently. Banks said, testily:

"Oh, bother that confounded thing. I say, Berryson, just ring up and tell my wife I'm busy. I'll attend to her presently."

Berryson complied, and Banks resumed his calculations.

We say Berryson complied, but he only had time to ring the bell, when he heard the following:

"I say, Alfred, Mrs. Berryson has just been in, and she mentioned that you had invited her husband and a few friends to dine with us to-morrow night. That's all very fine, but what did you mean by asking them without letting me know? And where do you suppose the wine is to come from that these horrid creatures will require? As for that Berryson, it's well-known what he is. He's the greatest glutton I ever saw. I tell you what it is. Just write and let them know that other engagements will prevent the dinner."

"What's she talking about?" inquired Banks, looking up for the first time from his papers, and surprised to see Berryson still at the telephone. But his amazement was complete when Berryson darted past him without a word, and left the office, banging the door after him. Then Banks went to the instrument, and, well——

N.B.—That telephone has never been used since.

C. L. L.

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WORTH A CROWN A DOSE.

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CHAPTER XXV.
"By Her Brother's Hand!"

"THIS man is Felix Cordelvin, *not* Anthony!"

As Dr. Branksome uttered the words Inspector Trench and Gerald Mortimer started back in amazement. They looked at one another and they looked at the doctor. Strange and mysterious as had been the circumstances leading up to this discovery, the expectation of anything so inexplicable as this had never entered their minds. And, as is very often the case, the sudden explosion of an unsuspected mine of truth, startled them into silence. None of the three could for a minute or two utter a word.

At length the detective broke the silence with a commonplace inquiry.

"Are you quite sure, doctor?"

"Absolutely," returned Branksome; "the face and the eyes especially are unmistakable."

Gerald Mortimer found his tongue at last.

"If that is all, Branksome," he said, "I think you may very easily be mistaken. I am informed that both Felix and Anthony resembled one another very closely."

"But I am——"

"Then," continued Gerald, almost triumphantly, "there is the matter of the arm. This man you see is minus an arm; he must be Anthony. Felix Cordelvin had both arms intact, had he not? At least, up to the time of his escape."

An exclamation broke from the detective, as if prompted by a sudden flash of intelligence.

"Mr. Mortimer," he observed, "you know more of the Cordelvin family history than I do. Can you tell me how and when Anthony Cordelvin lost his arm?"

"It happened about twenty-five years ago, as I am informed," Gerald replied. "A railway accident, I think, it was, led to the amputation."

"Thanks. Then, Dr. Branksome, I want to ask you something. Is an examination of a joint sufficient to enable you to fix the date of an amputation."

"Hum! it depends. You see——"

"I don't mean exactly, but approximately. Could you tell the difference between an operation performed twenty-five years ago, and one performed a few months since?"

"Assuredly. The appearance of the cuticle would be entirely different and the nerves would——"

"Then will you kindly," interposed the detective, "have the goodness to examine this gentleman's arm?"

Somewhat puzzled by the drift events had taken, Dr. Branksome walked over to Cordelvin and stooped down.

Ever since the entry of the three men he had maintained a kind of sullen silence, and now as the doctor asked him to remove his coat, he complied without opposing by word or gesture. The coat was removed, and the shirt rolled back over the arm, disclosing the stump closely enveloped in a short, tight-fitting singlet sleeve. With his penknife the doctor ripped this open and examined the shortened limb.

His inspection lasted but a few seconds. But as he looked his brows contracted, and when he turned to look at the two who eagerly watched him, it was with an expression of the utmost gravity.

"Inspector," he began. His tone was harsh, as of one speaking from a dry throat.

"Well?"

"There has been——" He stopped suddenly.

"Foul play?" suggested the detective.

The doctor nodded. "Yes, that is what I was going to say. This is Felix Cordelvin without a doubt, this arm has been amputated *within the last few weeks*, in fact, since he left the asylum."

Hardly had the last word escaped the doctor's lips than a violent change came over Cordelvin. Up to that moment he had remained seated on the damp floor of the cellar, sulky-looking, it is true, but tractable enough. Now, however, he sprang up, his eyes flashing with fury, and his whole demeanour betokening great mental agitation.

"Out of this, you interlopers!" he stormed; "out of my castle! Why have you come here? What right have you?"

He doubled his fist as he spoke and thumped the air in emphasis of his words. Then he went on:

"Don't you know who I am? I'm going to be Lord Mayor of London, and don't you take notice of anything Vanstone says. He's a fraud; he took me in, and he'll take you in, if you believe what he says. So out of it, I say—out of my castle."

Dr. Branksome looked at the lunatic while he thus raved. Then he made as though to speak to him, but at that moment Gerald touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, Branksome, but I think I can manage him," he said, in an undertone. "I am acquainted with his latest delusion."

Then, advancing towards Cordelvin, he said, with a bow:

"Pardon me, my lord, but I have brought these men here to attend to your requirements. This gentleman," indicating the detective, "is the furrier I mentioned to you. What he doesn't know about Polar bear skins isn't worth knowing. The other man is the Lord Mayor's special tailor. He wants to measure you for your robes."

Something like a smile of pleasure came over the poor demented creature's face.

"The Lord Mayor's tailor!" he repeated, chuckling as if he were hugely enjoying some joke, "then that accounts for his taking off my coat. He was going to measure me, eh?"

"Must have been, my lord," Gerald answered.

"Precisely so," broke in Dr. Branksome, now fully aware of the madman's delusion. "I just wanted to measure your lordship for your robes of office."

Cordelvin looked cunningly up at the doctor.

"Do you know, I seem to know your face."

"Most probably, my lord," returned the doctor unabashed. "I am very well known to most of the prominent men of the time. That's owing to my position, you see."

But the lunatic was not listening. His tether of coherent conversation seemed to have come to an end. He was busy with his own wandering thoughts.

"Polar bear skins," he kept murmuring. "Polar bear skins, bah! won't have 'em, won't have 'em!"

"I wouldn't, if I were you," chimed in the detective. "They're a bit out of fashion and would never do."

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"What would you recommend, then?" The lunatic was coherent again.

"If you'd only come and inspect my stock," responded the pseudo-furrier, "I'd guarantee to fit you out better than any previous Lord Mayor."

"You're my man! you're my man!" Cordelvin broke in enthusiastically. "I'll come with you. Where's your shop? I'll come now, I'm ready."

"Very good, my lord," answered the inspector, at once seeing that in Cordelvin's present mood, there was a good chance of getting him out of the house and into safe keeping. He moved a step towards Gerald and whispered:

"Get a cab—a four-wheeler, as soon as possible."

Quietly Gerald left the cellar, mounted the stairs, and departed on his errand.

A minute or two afterwards the detective, the doctor, and Cordelvin also reached the hall level. As they did so the door of the library suddenly opened, and Ruth Cordelvin stood for a moment gazing at them. Only for a moment, however, for at sight of Cordelvin the dull fire of her eyes seemed to leap into flame, and she darted towards the madman with arms outstretched.

Then a strange and fatal thing happened.

The poor, witless man, mistaking the effusive rush of Ruth Cordelvin for an intended attack, rushed forward to meet the onslaught. Ere the detective or doctor could throw out a restraining hand, the madman darted past them, seized a portable umbrella-stand from against the wall, and with all his force swung it through the air and brought it crashing down upon the woman's head. Only three words did she have time to utter ere the fearful blow felled her insensible to earth.

"Felix—my brother!"

Horrified the detective leapt at the man, the doctor bounding to the prostrate woman.

The officer pounced upon Cordelvin just as the plain-clothes man, who had been left in charge of the woman, closed with him from the other side, In thirty seconds he was secured.

"Dr. Branksome," inquired the detective, mopping his brow, and speaking in a low voice, "how is the lady?"

The doctor looked up slowly. In his eyes there was a look as of mingled sorrow and horror. He spoke in husky tones:

"*Ruth Cordelvin is dead!*"

"Good Heavens!"

"Dead!" he repeated, reverently covering the woman's face with his handkerchief. "Killed by her brother's hand!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Narrative of Ruth Cordelvin.

It was past midnight. Inspector Trench sat alone in his own sitting-room reading. From his apparent absorption the book he was perusing might have been an entrancing story. His eyes remained riveted on the leaves as one after another he turned them over. His pipe had passively been allowed to go out, a rare thing for so inveterate a smoker as the inspector. And yet his reading was not of fiction but of fact, strangely and sometimes hysterically-depicted fact certainly, but the real, downright, unblushing article without a doubt.

It was not print either that fascinated him. The book in his hand was a plain manuscript book, bound in shiny limp American cloth, and labelled on the outside in a sprawling, somewhat flourishing hand—

"*Diary of Ruth Cordelvin.*"

From beginning to end the officer read it through. Then he laid the book down, reloaded his pipe silently, lighted it thoughtfully, and then gave himself up to a few minutes' reflection.

Not for long, however. His mind was quickly made up. Procuring pen, ink, and paper, he once more opened the diary, and from it copied certain passages, until before him, after two or three hours close application, lay the story, a little bit erratic, disjointed, and abrupt in places, of Ruth

A Young Wife's Dilemma.

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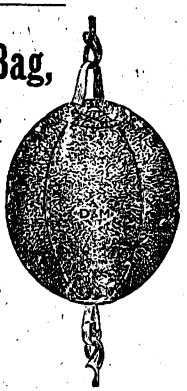

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Cordelvin in connection with her brother Felix and the two Vanstones. Omitting dates and certain repetitions, important from a police point of view, but unnecessary for this present purpose, this is how extracts from the diary, or rather disjointed narrative, read:

"To-day my search has been rewarded. I know where my brother is. Two months have I been in England after following Felix from Melbourne. From the time of my arrival I have tried to trace his whereabouts up till to-day, without success. He is shut up in the public asylum at Moulstone, a most iniquitous confinement. Felix is not mad, no madder than I am. Excitable and strange sometimes he is, but so am I. Why should he be shut up? As his sister, I must try to get him free. I shall have to be careful though. More than once I have heard people whisper about me, have seen them look on me with suspicion and shake their heads. If ordinary people do this, the asylum authorities might if I went to them. They might declare me mad too, and have me shut up. I must be careful.

"I have been to see the house of our cousin to-day on Brixton Hill. Anthony Cordelvin is almost our sole surviving relative. He is weak mentally, it is said, but he is very rich. Anthony's wealth has always been a terribly sore point with Felix, who has never had much money. Often and often have I heard him rave against his cousin, and it was with some idea of getting hold of the property that he came to England, after a bitter quarrel with me. Now I sometimes wonder if his all-absorbing envy of Anthony may have affected his brain. Other Cordelvins, as I have heard, in previous generations have been insane. Sometimes, it is a horrible thought, but sometimes I am a little mad myself."

"Several times lately I have been to the house on Brixton Hill, that is to say, outside it, for I never venture too near for fear of recognition. They might swear I was mad, and I might be shut up like poor Felix. I have seen Roderick Vanstone, who manages the estate for Anthony. He is a crafty-looking man, a villain I am sure. I don't like him."

"A strange thing has happened. Roderick Vanstone has been to Moulstone. I followed him from London there. Why should he go there? Felix, as I have learnt, was admitted as a pauper, and no relative or acquaintance has ever claimed knowledge of him. Why then has Vanstone been to the asylum? Special permit to inspect the asylum, so the porter at the gate told me. No inquiry for any patient at all. It's very strange. If Vanstone wanted to see a mad-house, why out of the hundreds existing does he select the one where Felix is? I don't trust the man."

"Vanstone has been down to Moulstone again. Not in the asylum this time, but all round the walls. I followed him, for his movements fascinate me, and I saw him pause and look at the walls many times. What can be his object? I am suspicious of the man, he looks so crafty. Moreover, I have seen him talking to one of the warders in a wood near the asylum. What is his purpose? I must watch and watch to find out. I fear something may happen to Felix."

"I am more nervous than ever about poor Felix. Vanstone has been down again to Moulstone, and last night I had a dream—oh! such a dreadful dream, in which Vanstone killed somebody—who, I am not sure, but perhaps it was my brother, I must watch, watch, to see no harm comes to him. How I wish I could go to the asylum and tell them my suspicions of Vanstone. But that would not do. They might say I was mad, and they might have me shut up."

"Once again I have followed Vanstone to the neighbourhood of Moulstone Asylum. And once again I found him talking to the warder in the wood. This time I determined to try and hear what they had to say to one another. So I crept up, keeping well out of their sight until I got within earshot of them.

"'You have arranged it all?' I heard Vanstone say.

"'Yes, all will be ready for to-morrow night, or rather about two o'clock in the morning,' the warder answered. 'But how about my reward, sir?'

"'Well, you have had ten pounds,' Vanstone said, 'And the other ninety will be handed to you directly the business is settled. Two o'clock in the morning, you say?'

"'Yes; I will bring him to the corner of the south wall.'

"'Good, I will be waiting there to receive him.'

"There was more talk after that, some of which I could not catch, but I had heard enough to make me believe that something serious was afoot. I am greatly troubled in my mind at all this, for I feel fully convinced that whatever is going to be done, it bodes ill for my brother Felix. I have nothing definite to go upon, of course, but in matters affecting my brother I am always strangely aware of impending calamity beforehand. But I dare not talk to other people like this. They would think me mad. The only thing to do is to watch—always watch. Whatever is to befal, I must be at hand to see.

"What I suspected was going to happen, has happened. My brother Felix is missing from the asylum. Let me, for future reference, formally chronicle the events in their proper order. After the conversation between Vanstone and the warder which I had overheard, I remained near the asylum all the next day. At the beginning my nerves were none too good, my fears and apprehensions having upset me a good deal. But that day spent in melancholy and exciting vigil in the wood, scarcely touching food all the time, and not getting one moment's relief from the strain which was upon me, told its tale. By the time the night came I was quite overwrought. I seemed to lose all sense of everything except the impending something which threatened my brother. At about ten o'clock I came out of the wood where I had remained all day, and moved about among the field paths for a long time. Then, as it was getting towards midnight, I walked out on to the high road.

"I was feeling very worried and well nigh distraught. My fears magnified and distorted innocent things in the hedgerows into hideous and terrifying ogres. I trembled from head to toe: I felt that if my agony of suspense lasted much longer, I should drop down from sheer exhaustion of brain.

"Presently, there issued from the asylum gates, the figure of a man. Of course in my calmer moments I should have known the thing to be impossible, but at the moment I caught sight of him I thought the man was Felix. With my heart wildly beating I walked right up to the approaching man, and peered close in his face. He stopped and inquired in a kindly, cultivated tone what it was I wanted.

"The strange voice called me a little to myself, and I shrank back, murmuring I scarcely know what. Whatever it was I said, it aroused the man's compassion. He asked if he could assist me in any way, and even invited me to stay at his mother's house for the night. This of course I did not want to do. I had work to do that night, and besides, to go with him in my then state might have led to an examination which would have declared me mad. (This fear—the fear of being shut up in an asylum is ever with me. It has prevented me laying all the facts in my knowledge before the authorities long ago). This young man (Gerald Mortimer, I have since ascertained, is his name)) was very persistent. He tried to compel me to go to his mother's, and I had eventually to run across the fields from him and hide in the wood. I remained there for a good while, until the rattle of wheels on the sandy road leading towards the asylum, made me issue therefrom and resume my task of watching.

"To do this I made my way out at the top of the wood, crossed the strip of meadowland, dividing it from the road. Almost immediately I caught sight of a closed fly. There was a burly man sitting on the box, while, impatiently pacing the path, keeping as much in the shadow as he possibly could, walked one whom I immediately recognised as Roderick Vanstone.

"Crouching low amongst a clump of furze bushes I was hidden from all observation.

"I had not long to wait before something occurred which Vanstone apparently expected. Over the top of the asylum wall there appeared a face. It was the face of my brother Felix Cordelvin. I could not mistake it. No one has eyes like

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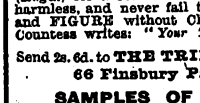

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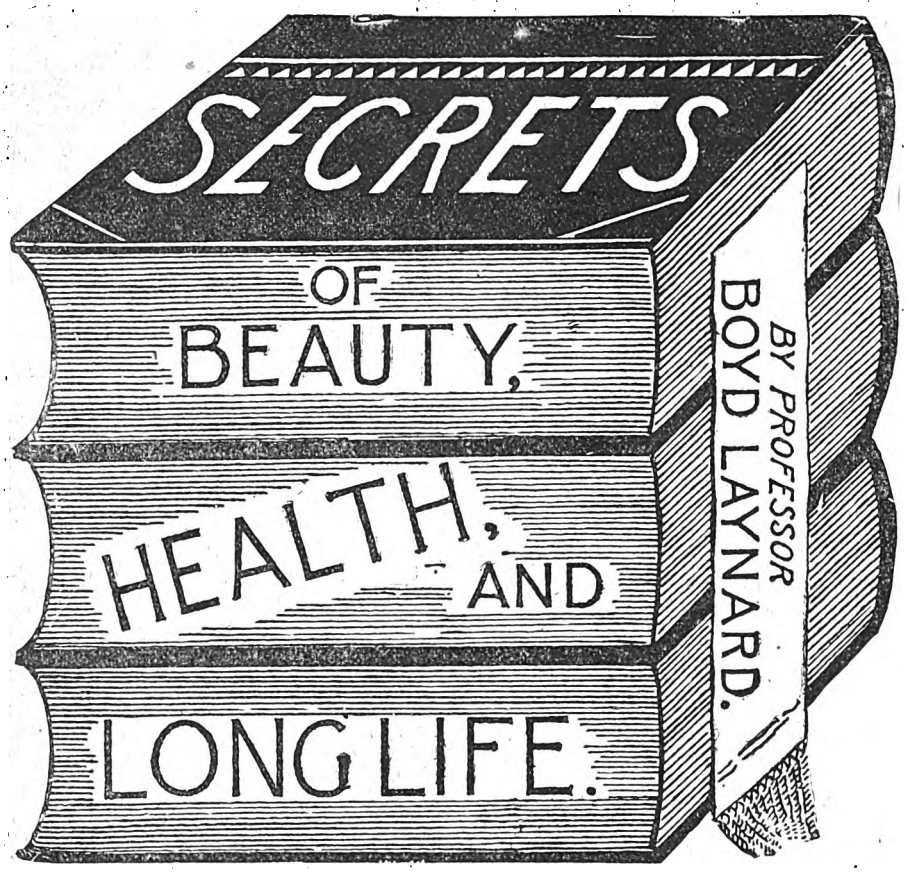

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Felix—except perhaps myself. At the appearance of the head over the wall Vanstone did not lose a minute. From the interior of the fly, he took out a folding ladder, which he promptly placed against the wall. Down this Felix climbed nimbly. A minute later—less than that, for it all happened before I could realise it—the man on the box had whipped up the horse and driven away. I tried to follow, but it was in vain that my weak, trembling limbs pursued the vehicle."

"I am back in London again. I caught the first train back on the morning following the escape or kidnapping (whichever it is) of my brother. I judged that Vanstone would go back there too, and I judged rightly. For, on my repairing as soon as possible to Brixton, I caught sight of him walking in the grounds. (I had previously got a key made to fit one of the gates.) Whether my brother Felix was in the house I could not at this time tell, but I resolved to do my utmost to find out.

"Late that night, Roderick Vanstone came from his house and, walking down Brixton Hill, engaged a cab. I got another and ordered my driver to follow his. What a long weary way we went, right over London Bridge, through the City to the dreary East End. Vanstone alighted and called on Dr. Ephraim Manisty, Stevedore Street, Ratcliff Highway, who, to my astonishment, presently emerged with Vanstone and entered the cab with him. As they came out, they nearly detected my presence on the step, where I had crouched, vainly trying to catch whatever conversation they might be having. But I heard nothing, and there was nothing else to do but to still follow their cab.

"All the way back to Brixton Hill I was trying to guess the nature of this nocturnal errand. If a doctor were needed, as was evidently the case, why had not a local one been called in? Why had Vanstone taken so long a journey to seek out an obscure practitioner in the East End? Something—some vile plot—was afoot. I followed in their wake right to the house walls, watched for the appearance of a light, and then went to the window where it presently shone.

"With my ears pressed close against the panes I listened intently. But I could distinguish no words, only a mumbling sound. As I remained there listening I was very nearly discovered, for a sudden gust of wind made my cloak rattle against the window. Immediately I heard the curtains inside drawn back, and I had to remove a step or two to avoid being seen. In the light of the room I could see Dr. Manisty, his face very pale, and his manner plainly one of fear. But in that brief glance which I had of him, it was not his face which attracted me most. It was something he held in his hand, the bright, glittering blade of a surgeon's scalpel! Only one brief glance did I get of it, for immediately afterwards the curtains were drawn close to, and I could see no more.

"But what I had seen was sufficient to fill me with a dazing sense of infinite fear. What was Dr. Manisty doing with that instrument? Performing an operation? Of what kind? On whom? For what reason? A score of questions crowded themselves on to me. There came back to my inner consciousness but one word in answer. Felix!

"My brother's name came upon me with the force of a cannon shot. What were they doing with him? What was their black plot? Oh, that I could unmask them!

"In my frenzy I actually forgot all risk of discovery for a second, and tried the catch of the French window. For a second time the curtains were drawn back and once more Dr. Manisty showed himself, mortal dread in his eyes now. Then, as before, the curtains were hurriedly drawn again, and I saw no more.

"I waited two—three hours. Dr. Manisty departed. I saw him go, and I let him go. I waited on, sheltering myself in an outhouse in full view of the whole side of the house.

"Almost precisely as the clock of a neighbouring church was striking the hour of four, Roderick Vanstone emerged from the house, accompanied by a younger man, his son, I believe. It was sufficiently strange to see them come out at such an hour, but to see them carrying a lantern, a pick-axe, spades, and a box, was far more so.

"Straight across to a shrubbery on the other side of the grounds they walked and I followed them. For the next half hour I saw them hack and dig, and in the hole which they had dug, I saw them place the box. Then they carefully filled in the deep hole, and quite unaware of the fact that they were being watched, made their way back, leaving their paraphernalia in a tool-house, and then going indoors.

"What was it they had buried? Something out of the way since it demanded a cloak of darkness for its burial. I would have seized a spade there and then and gone at once to re-open the hole in the shrubbery, but I reflected that morning would break ere I could complete my task, and that the risk to me would be considerable.

"So I made up my mind to relinquish my intention for the time. I would come the next night and dig and dig till I came upon what I felt sure would be a guilty secret."

"I am weary and sick at heart. I have discovered the guilty secret, but I am powerless to punish this monster Vanstone. Why am I condemned to have the mortal fear of madness on me? But for that, I could now go straight to the police and inform against these villains. Some day, perhaps, I may yet get the courage, but just now, no—I dare not.

"I must be calm though, and record what I have done. I visited the shrubbery as I had determined the next night, and after a little trouble I found the spot on which the two men had dug the night previously. Then I began to dig upon the same spot. It was dreadful work. Not only in its aching effects upon my poor weak and tired limbs, but from the abiding consciousness that any moment I might come across what I intuitively surmised must be some grim object. At last my spade struck wood, and now I knew that I should soon be at the end of my search. I extricated the box, hauled it up, opened it, and gazed upon its contents by the light of my shaded lantern.

"Horror! my brain reeled as I looked, the bushes around me seemed to revolve, the mould at my feet to roll and leap as if from an earthquake. Only by a great effort was I able to control myself. And then once more I looked and saw, what?

"A human arm, amputated just above the elbow!

"When we see those that we love, we can recognise them without getting a full view of their face. We know them by their hair, their eyes, their mouths, their shoulders. In like manner, as I looked upon the grim object lying in the box below me, I recognised the shape and markings of the hand, and from that moment I knew that the amputated limb belonged to Felix Cordelvin, my brother!"

(To be concluded.)

Misunderstood.

CLARA: "Now, I'm all ready for the ball. How do I look, Jack?" Jack: "You remind me of a Sioux in his war-paint." Clara: "Oh, you nasty thing! I—I——" Jack: "Don't cry, darling! I simply meant you were dressed to kill."

Her Own Work.

YOUNG WIFE: "I knew you would like the slippers, Harry, if for no other reason because I made them." Husband: "You don't mean to say this is all your work? Why, what a talented little wife I have, to be sure." Young Wife: "Yes, all my work. Of course I bought the uppers, and Mary sewed them together, and I got a man to sole them; but I put the bows on, and did them up in the box. And, do you know, Harry, I am just proud of myself. I didn't think I could ever do such things, indeed I didn't."

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IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by

MADGE MORRIS.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

A Case for Candour.

"Margaret" has a young man at the front, to whom she has been attached from childhood, and has promised marriage. Since he has been at the war, she has met another man whom she really loves. The soldier thinks she will be true to him. How can she act?—If you really love the second man, you should not hesitate to accept him. Unfortunately, it only too often happens that a girl discovers during her sweetheart's absence at the war, especially one of such long duration as the present, that there is another she loves better. Don't try to deceive your soldier friend.

❦❦❦

Be quite candid with him. Tell him the complete truth. It will, of course, be a blow to him, but it will be better than if he grew suspicious and worried himself with doubt about you, to find out on his return that you were no longer true to him. The girl who pretends to be still fond of one man while she loves another usually loses both, as in the case of the heroine of the play "Iris." Be open with him, "Margaret," and though he will be distressed for the time being, it will be better for both of you that you should marry the man you love.

❦❦❦

A Too Bland Sweetheart.

"Amy" suffers from a lack of proper jealousy on the part of the young man to whom she is engaged. For a long time they have been on terms of intimacy, of a rather "pallish" order than otherwise. Lately, she has met a man who has professed a deep attachment for her, and continues to write the most ecstatic letters, protesting his devotion. For some time she treated it as a joke, then decided to let her *fiancé* know about it, and abide by the consequences.

❦❦❦

When she told him, instead of turning into a white heat of passion, he smiled, and in the most amiable way asked why she did not answer such nice letters in an appropriate strain, and in other ways seemed to be humorously indifferent to the claims of his rival. Does this attitude suggest that he does not care for her, and so does not mind her receiving letters from another?

❦❦❦

I rather think that young man is so sure of "Amy's" affection towards himself that he is profoundly contemptuous to the chances of another. Probably "Amy" has too often revealed that she could never care for anyone else for him to be led into supposing the other man could have a look in. At the same time, it is exceedingly bad taste on his part, at any rate, not to show some jealousy. But seriously, "Amy," you should very kindly but firmly tell that other man that he must cease his letters, in spite of your own lover's indifference. It is no use allowing such pretensions to continue. Probably a straight word of reproval will at once bring the obnoxious correspondence to an end.

❦❦❦

Should Schoolgirls Flirt?

"Mrs. A. F." has a daughter who is at school, where she has a reputation for being a terrible flirt with the local youth. This my correspondent has taken no notice of, believing that for a schoolgirl to flirt with boys does not necessarily mean any harm, but rather tends to fit them for entering male society when they get older without that absurd modesty shown by so many girls. I do not agree with the philosophic attitude of "Mrs. A. F.," which is one of those things excellent in theory but often fatal in practice.

❦❦❦

What "Mrs. A. F." may picture herself as flirting may be very different in fact. It may be far from the innocent play which she suspects. Young girls are more liable to cast their eyes towards the bold, bad music master, or the handsome curate, than towards some insignificant, crude schoolboy, and the results are often bad. The men in question, while never for a moment entertaining serious thoughts of any feeling towards the girls, are not, as a rule deficient in the artifices of love-making, which they use to no small advantage in stealing the girls' affections. "Mrs. A. F." may be right as regards the innocence of flirting with schoolboys, but girls should not be allowed too much license in this way, as the consequences are seldom other than harmful.

❦❦❦

One Good Trick Deserves Another.

Some two or three years ago, "Anxious One" fell in love with a young man. Later on she received a letter from him saying he could not love her, but could only regard her as a friend. Since that, however, he has informed her that he is very fond of her, and says he simply wrote to her in that strain to find out if she really cared for him. She doubts his sincerity. Should she resume the acquaintance which was so cruelly broken off?

❦❦❦

I think the best way now for you to test his love is to pay him back in exactly the same coin. Why not write to him saying you yourself do not feel you really love him, and wait developments. If he is really and truly fond of you he will instantly resume his suit, and if so you will then know his sincerity. The truth of the matter, however, is probably not that he was really in love with you and anxious to put you to the test, but that at the time of his momentous letter was in doubts as to the state of his feelings, which after a while became clearer, when he wrote and retracted what he had said. If this is the case, his affection is quite possibly likely to be more lasting, as he has turned the matter over in his mind, and finally decided that he does love you.

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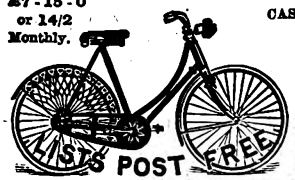

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CHAPTER I.

Concerning Love and Villainy.

"IT is an extraordinary thing," said John Mansfield, the banker, as he leant back in his deck chair, with something approaching a sigh, "that even in the privacy of one's home, one can't get away from business."

The remark was addressed to a little group of individuals, who, seated beneath a shady verandah that looked out on a smooth, sunlit lawn, were indulging in afternoon tea.

Esther Mansfield, the banker's only child, a winsome, sweet girl who had seen some twenty summers, was presiding at the tea-table. The rebellious brown hair that clustered lovingly over her low, straight forehead, seemed to enhance the transparent clearness of her soft, white skin. The rosy glow of healthful youth was on her cheeks. But her chief glory lay in her eyes, dark, luminous, speaking eyes. One glance at her pretty face was sufficient to tell of a womanly, sympathetic nature, of a life hitherto unclouded by sorrow or trouble.

On one side of her sat Alec Scarsdale, Mr. Mansfield's confidential clerk, on the other, a Mr. Seaton Revelle, both of whom the banker had invited down to his country house on a Saturday to Monday visit.

Alec Scarsdale was a handsome, broad-shouldered young fellow of some twenty-six years, with a clean-shaven, self-reliant face, crisp, close-cropped hair, and clear, grey eyes. Clear-headed, frank, and outspoken, he had already won Mr. Scarsdale's confidence. The banker had been heard to say more than once, that Scarsdale was one man in a thousand. It was thought by some that before long the name of the firm would be changed to "Mansfield and Scarsdale."

But Scarsdale had won something more than John Mansfield's confidence; he had won the love of his daughter Esther. That afternoon, he had told her in simple, manly fashion that he loved her, and she, her blushing face hidden on his shoulder, had whispered that she returned his love, Then, when the first silence of joy had given way to speech, they had dared, as only lovers dare, to speak of, to limn the future, building fairy castles in the air.

They had returned to the house to find tea awaiting them. The presence of Mr. Seaton Revelle had prevented Scarsdale from speaking privately with Mr. Mansfield, and asking his consent to their engagement.

Seaton Revelle—John Mansfield had made his acquaintance some two years previously, while spending a holiday on the Continent—was, to all outward appearances, a well-bred, polished man of the world. There was a certain charm about his soft, musical voice, and rather indolent manner. But the indolence of manner was only a cloak; few people guessed the nature of the true character that lay beneath. He was singularly good-looking, and his black hair, slightly tinged with grey, gave an almost romantic expression to his clear-cut features.

"You don't mean to tell me," he said, "that people worry you over business down here, Mr. Mansfield?"

"I do, indeed," replied the banker, "why, only this afternoon, an utter stranger called on me—a bearded, sunburnt fellow, just home from South Africa. He was shown into the drawing-room, and, when I entered, he coolly unbuttoned his waistcoat, and took from round his waist a money-belt, stuffed with bank-notes and diamonds, and wanted me to take charge of it. 'That's my little pile,' he said, 'I'm bound to be in liquor before the day's over, and I might lose the lot. You're a banker, give me a receipt for it, and stow it away in your safe.' I explained that, though I was a banker I did business at my bank in London, not at my private house in the country."

A smile of amusement played about Seaton Revelle's lips.

"Yes," continued the banker, "and though I at first refused to have anything to do with his valuables, he was so persistent, besides being in no fit state to have charge of so much money, that I agreed to lock the belt in my private safe and return it to him on Monday. I have since learnt that he is the son of a farm labourer in the village. The old man recommended him to come to me. Four years ago he landed in South Africa with a few shillings in his pocket, to-day he has returned home with a substantial fortune."

"Extraordinary," said Seaton Revelle, as he stroked his silky moustache with a long, strong hand; "it will probably take him less than four years to spend it. Easily won, they say, easily lost."

"Oh, I hope not," said Esther. "Don't you think, father, you might speak to him seriously when he comes on Monday, and get him to invest it, or something?"

"I certainly shall. Consols—what do you think, Scarsdale?"

"It will be safe enough there," said Scarsdale, with a smile; "safer, even, than in your safe."

"Ah, don't you impugn my safe, young man," said the banker, with a laugh, as he rose to his feet. "Well, I suppose I must write my letters if they are to be delivered in London to-night."

"And that reminds me," said Revelle. "I ought to do the same—a nuisance, letter-writing."

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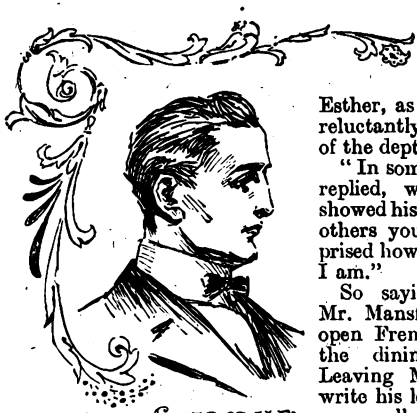

"I am afraid you are a very lazy person, Mr. Revelle," said Esther, as she watched him reluctantly draw himself out of the depths of the chair.

"In some things, yes," he replied, with a smile that showed his white teeth. "In others you would be surprised how awfully energetic I am."

So saying, he followed Mr. Mansfield through the open French windows into the dining-room beyond. Leaving Mr. Mansfield to write his letters in his study—a small room next door to the dining-room, Revelle went upstairs to his bedroom. He lit a cigarette and began to puff at it.

"Yes," he muttered slowly, as he inhaled the smoke deep into his lungs, and then let it slowly escape through his nostrils, "there's a small fortune in that safe. It's worth bidding for! Risky, pah! I've worked finer and more delicate jobs than this in the past. Banknotes and diamonds! Ten to one Mansfield never took the numbers of the notes; and diamonds, thank Heaven, don't have such things! I'm pretty hard up, and it's about time I brought off another *coup*. That affair of the Bond Street jeweller's shop paid well enough; but I spend money fast, and I don't believe there's twenty pounds to my credit at the bank."

And this was Mr. Seaton Revelle, a man to be met in the highest social circles, and whom popular rumour credited with a private income of some two to three thousand pounds a year. A man who led a double life; a man of iron nerve and cool audacity, utterly untroubled by such a thing as conscience, whose very daring contributed to his success.

The finely assumed air of languid indolence had left him as he stood for a moment with puckered forehead, mentally calculating.

"Yes," he continued, after another deep inhalation of smoke, "I shall want help from the outside. The stuff must be in London and turned into hard cash before the loss is discovered. Yes, Benny's the man for me—silent as the grave, honest as daylight, he's only wanting in originality of ideas, or he would be in as good a position as myself. I must drop Benny a line. Yes, I think it's going to work out very smoothly. Benny rides a bicycle!"

Tearing a blank sheet of paper from his notebook, he sat himself down at a table, and pencilled the following note—

> "DEAR BENNY,—I am meditating a little stroke of business. You can help me. To-morrow, Sunday, bicycle down to Warham—it's only eighteen miles from London—don't be later than three o'clock in the afternoon. See that your bicycle is in good trim, and bring your lantern and spanners. Put up at the "Crown and Cushion"; let the landlord casually know that you are returning to London *before five o'clock*. Then take a stroll through Warham Wood. You cannot mistake the bridle-path that leads to the reservoir. You will find me there. Now, remember, don't fail me. You know what to do with a letter of this sort. "THE MARQUIS."

Then, going to his portmanteau, Seaton Revelle took from it a plain envelope, and addressed it to "Mr. Benjamin Beard, 132a, Lambeth Road, London."

"Ah," he exclaimed, as he was on the point of sealing up the envelope, "I knew I had forgotten something."

Drawing out the slip of paper, he added a postcript—

"I have been sleeping very badly lately; bring with you a stiff dose of my own particular powder."

Mr. Seaton Revelle did not intrust his letter to the servant who carried Mr. Mansfield's correspondence, but, sauntering down to the village, posted it himself.

Meantime, after waiting till the banker had written his letters, Scarsdale had gone to him and had told him of what had passed between Esther and himself.

"Alec," said the old man, as, speaking with emotion, he gripped his hand, "you have my consent. God bless you! I am an old man, and I've dreaded the day when I must lose my little girl, but—but I'd sooner lose her to you than any man. There, you mustn't think me selfish. Alec, my boy, God bless you, and may you both be as happy as you deserve to be. Now send Esther to me!"

And Esther, a few moments later, with burning cheeks and sparkling eyes, glided bashfully into the room.

"Alec has told you," she whispered, as her father took her in his arms and kissed her. "I—I'm so happy!"

"You are quite sure you love him?" said her father, in a low voice.

"Oh, father, yes!"

The simple, telling words came straight from her heart.

Half-an-hour later the two lovers had left the house. The sun was already sinking behind the trees when they reached the edge of Warham Wood, and striking a bridle path, passed through to an open space that overlooked a reservoir, its artificiality concealed by the reeds and rushes that lined the banks. Nestling below them in a hollow, and girt about by trees, it might have been a tiny lake of Nature's, not man's design. Seated on the trunk of a fallen oak, his arm about her, her head resting on his shoulder—supremely happy—they watched the blood-red sun, tingeing wood and water with a flood of crimson light, sink beneath the horizon, then the afterglow—a memory of what had been, then darkness, the darkness of night.

In days to come, when anguish, doubt, and grief are tearing at their hearts, when the darkness of despair, like the dark night-clouds, is upon them, they will recall that brief hour of bliss with an agony of wild regret.

"Esther," whispered Alec Scarsdale, "tell me that I have your love for ever!"

"Yes, Alec, for ever!"

And the silent figure behind them, that had come upon them unobserved, hearing the whispered words, smiled softly!

CHAPTER II.

The Meeting in Warham Wood—Mr. Mansfield Feels Sleepy.

PRECISELY at three o'clock on the following afternoon, a bicyclist dismounted outside the "Crown and Cushion," an old-fashioned inn in the village of Warham, and some three-quarters of a mile from Mr. Mansfield's house. Having placed his bicycle in the stable, and having incidentally let fall that he was returning to London about five o'clock, the bicyclist inquired of the inn-keeper, one John Goodman of rubicund countenance, the way to the reservoir in Warham Wood.

Benjamin Beard, called by his intimate friends Benny, was a dapper, slim-built little man, with a sharp and rather fox-like face, and a pair of small, ferrety eyes, with a remarkably comprehensive range. In fact, it had more than once been remarked that Benny seemed capable of seeing what was going on behind him. In years, he appeared about thirty-five. He was neatly dressed in a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers. In spite of his name, no hirsute appendage adorned his lip or chin, both of which had that bluish tint that comes from frequent shaving.

Having reached the wood, he struck the bridle-path, and, on nearing the open space from where, the night before,

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Alec and Esther had watched the sunset, he saw the figure of a man, who, a cigar between his teeth, was sauntering up and down.

"The Marquis," muttered Benny, quickening his step, "smoking his half-dollar cigar, the same old devil-may-care style, don't care a rap for anybody—truly he's a marvel. Well, I'm just busting to know what he's got on the cards; something big, I'll bet a sovereign!"

"Ah, Benny," said Seaton Revelle, as they shook hands, "glad you've turned up to time. Pretty spot this, isn't it? It also has the advantage of being quiet. We are not likely to be interrupted."

"What's the game, Marquis?" said Benny, his ferrety eyes a-gleam with curiosity, "I've been wondering when I should hear from you. You've practically done nothing since that little Bond Street job."

"I've been taking it easy," he drawled, watching the blue smoke curl upward from the end of his cigar; then, after a pause: "First of all, have you got that powder?"

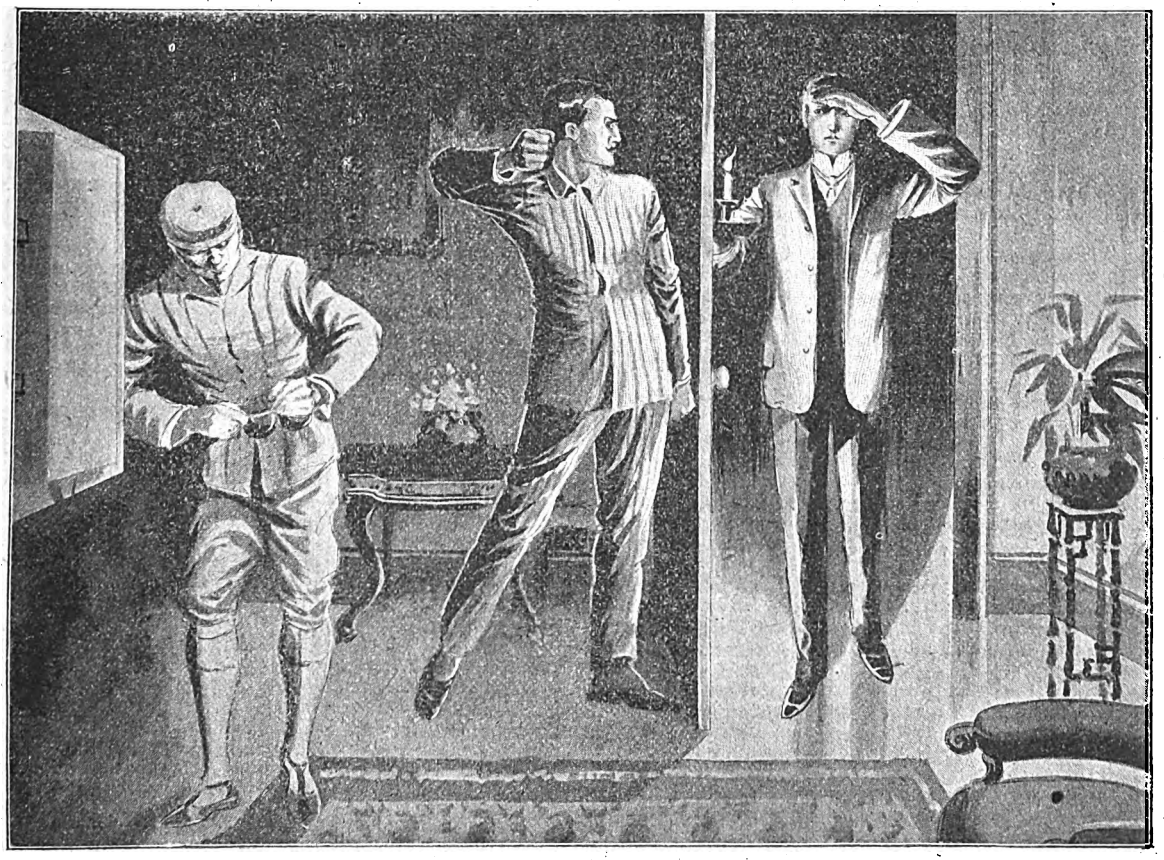
Benny drew a small packet from his pocket.

"Half of that, Marquis, is quite enough to induce sleep. Don't use more; it might be risky. But, for Heaven's sake! let's have the details. I'm on tenter-hooks."

Seaton Revelle gave a quick glance round, and then briefly related the incident of the returned traveller from South Africa and his money-belt.

"But it's stowed away in a safe," said Benny, dubiously, "and you know what a business it is to crack a modern safe. Why, we haven't the proper tools."

"My dear Benny," said Revelle, a slight touch of contempt in his voice, "why don't you use your brains, and think. It's not a question of breaking open the safe; only unlocking it, taking out the belt, and locking it up again. Mansfield carries the key about him. He always takes a 'night-cap' before doing to bed. I shall put half that powder in his whisky. I sleep on the same floor as he does. I shall get that key, slip down and let you in through the dining-room window. You must conceal your bicycle by the side of the road. Once you've got the belt, you must ride for all you're worth to London. I



The next instant Alec Scarsdale, fully dressed, carrying a candle in one hand and shading his eyes with the other, crossed the threshold.

shall lock up the window, slip back the key, and go quietly to bed. There will be absolutely no clue to what has taken place, till Mansfield opens the safe. That may not be till mid-day."

Benny's small eyes shone with admiration.

"Marquis, you're a marvel. It's simplicity itself."

"Simplicity and success," said Seaton Revelle, knocking the ash off the end of his cigar, "as a rule go together."

"And what's my share to be," asked Benny

"One-third; I think that's fair."

"Quite," said Benny, almost humbly.

"Now," continued Revelle, "Mansfield's house is the first house on the road after you leave the village. A pathway leads from the front to the back—gravel. What about your boots?"

Benny winked, and turned up one of his feet; his bicycle shoes had rubber soles.

"Good—at two o'clock precisely, not a second later, you must be outside the French windows that look on to the lawn. Now get back to the inn; start off as if for London, then fill in the time as best you can, only don't be seen pottering about, and be outside the French windows at two o'clock to-night, or rather, to-morrow morning."

"Well, ta-ta, Marquis, till to-night!"

"Till to-night, Benny!"

For some time Seaton Revelle stood alone, wrapped in contemplation. He had dismissed the intended burglary from his mind. He was thinking of Esther's engagement to Alec Scarsdale. The night before, when they had returned from their walk, utterly unconscious that there had been another person besides themselves in the wood, he had congratulated them both, no sign on his handsome, smooth face of the inward rankling. Apart from the fact that Esther was an heiress, she had attracted him. He was a man, whose daring audacity knew no bounds. It would have been no bad move to have gradually cut himself away from the old life, marry Esther and her fortune, and settle down to a comfortable life of luxury. But now, Scarsdale barred the way.

"Confound the fellow," he muttered, as he sauntered back to the house, "he's stolen a march on me. But—well, we shall see!"

That evening, after Esther had retired to bed, the three gentlemen sat in the smoking room, enjoying their cigars, and a chat, before turning in. On a bureau in one corner stood a tray with decanters of spirits and syphons of soda-water upon it.

"Alec," said the banker, "it's about time I had my 'night-cap.' Be a good fellow, and mix it for me—you know my dose!"

Scarsdale went to the bureau, and, his back turned, mixed the drink. He was some little time, the first syphon that he essayed, refusing to work properly. Then, having handed the glass to the banker, he turned to Seaton Revelle:

"Shall I mix you one?"

"Thanks, very good of you; a very little whisky, please,"

Revelle was sitting next to Mr. Mansfield, who was leaning back in a low chair, and, after sipping his whisky, he placed his glass on the floor.

Revelle abstractedly thrust a hand into his waistcoat pocket, then, withdrawing it, allowed it to dangle between his chair and Mr. Mansfield's, and immediately over the glass below.

At the same time, with his other hand, he politely suppressed a yawn.

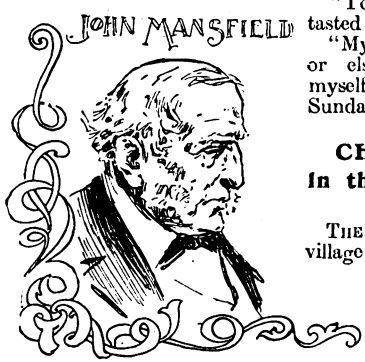
A quarter of an hour later, his whisky finished, Mr. Mansfield, in his turn, stifled a yawn, and glanced at the clock.

"Well, gentlemen, I don't know how you feel, but I'm feeling remarkably sleepy. What do you say to turning in?"

Again he suppressed a yawn, and then made a movement with his lips as if a strange taste was in his mouth.

"I say, Alec, what have you been doing with the whisky? It's left a curious taste in my mouth."

Seaton Revelle was coolly contemplating the massive signet ring on his little finger. Scarsdale laughed.



"I don't know. Mine tasted right enough."

"My imagination, perhaps, or else I've over-smoked myself. I generally do on Sundays."

CHAPTER III.

In the Silence of the Night.

THE solitary note of the village clock, striking the half-hour, had died away, and the death-like silence that pervaded the deserted road from Warham village to Mr. Mansfield's house was only broken by the faint whirr of a bicycle. Though the night was dark and starless, the cyclist rode with an unlighted lamp. Fifty yards from Mr. Mansfield's house he dismounted, and noiselessly concealed a machine in the edge that lined the road. Then, having reached the house, no lights shining out from the shuttered windows, he silently passed down a path leading through a shrubbery to the lawn at the back. For twenty minutes, never stirring, scarcely breathing, he stood by the dining-room windows, completely enshrouded in a deep shadow.

Cool hand as Benny was, a quiver of excitement passed over him, as a faint grating sound, coming from behind the windows, reached his ears. The next moment the shutters had been drawn back, and the window noiselessly opened.

"Hist!"

"Right," breathed Benny, "I'm here," and more like a shadow than a man of flesh and blood, he glided through the open window into the pitch-dark room beyond.

"The old man's sleeping like a log," whispered the voice of Seaton Revelle from out the blackness, "I've got the key. Light up!"

Benny drew a tiny lantern from his pocket, and, having struck a match that emitted no noise, lit it. For a moment the light fell upon the figure of Revelle, dressed in a suit of silk pyjamas, a slight flush of colour on his usually pallid face.

"The safe's in the study on the ground floor. Follow me, and, for Heaven's sake, don't make a noise—there's a bedroom above!"

With cat-like, noiseless tread, Revelle led the way from the dining-room into the hall. Benny might have been his shadow. In the hall they paused for a moment to listen. The ghostly silence was only broken by the monotonous ticking of the clock.

"Leave the door open," whispered Revelle, as they glided into the study; "now lend a hand with the lantern."

A minute later, a yellow circle of light fell upon the massive safe that, half-buried in the wall, stood in one corner of the room.

Revelle had a bundle of keys in his hand; holding it in the light of the lantern, he selected one of a peculiar pattern.

"Thank goodness," he whispered, as he fitted it in the lock, "it's an ordinary not a combination lock."

He turned the key, and the great door swung back noiselessly on its well-oiled hinges.

"Keep that light steady, confound you! It's bobbing up and down like a will-o'-the-wisp!"

Benny steadied himself. He was as cool as most men, but in the moment of intense excitement he had suddenly discovered a strange tremor. He was a skilled and experienced cracksman, but there was something almost unnatural to him in the ease and simplicity with which it had all been done. The safe was open, and the lantern's full glare fell upon a broad belt with many buttoned pockets that lay upon one of the shelves. Seaton Revelle, alias the Marquis, was quite calm, as picking up the belt, he critically fingered it. The faint, crisp, crackling sound that came from it told of an inner lining of bank-notes. Two of the pockets bulged out with small nobby projections.

"Now, Benny, give me the lantern," whispered Revelle, "and slip this belt round your waist. The sooner you're off the premises now, the better——"

Crash!

Except where the lantern cast a small circle of light, the room was in utter darkness. As Benny had fastened the belt round his waist, his elbow had come in contact with a china vase on the mantelpiece, and had dashed it to the ground.

"You clumsy idiot," hissed Revelle; "keep still, don't move."

He had clutched him by the wrist. Mr. Seaton Revelle had his wits about him. If that crash had awakened anyone, he calculated that they would listen before leaving their beds; and if no further sound followed, would turn over and go to sleep again.

But the next moment a stifled oath escaped his lips.

Someone was moving across the floor of the room overhead.

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"Out with the light! Don't move, Benny," he breathed between his clenched teeth; "leave it to me."

Quick as thought, he drew himself up close to the half-opened door.

The footsteps were moving towards the study. Revelle clenched his fist with the action of a man about to strike.

The next instant Alec Scarsdale, fully dressed, carrying a candle in one hand and shading his eyes with the other, crossed the threshold.

He started back as his eyes fell upon the motionless figure of Benny, dimly lighted by the candle, standing beside the open safe. Then, before he could cry out or raise the alarm, there was the sickening sound of a blow. With a dull thud he rolled over on to the thick carpet, stunned and insensible, and still clutching the burning candle.

"Go, Benny, go," hoarsely whispered Revelle, as dashing to the safe, he snatched out the key with the bundle attached to it, and bending down beside the motionless form, jammed it into the hand that was free, "ride like the devil, I'm going to raise the alarm—it's my only chance."

Benny darted from the room. Revelle blew out the candle; then feeling in his breast pocket, he drew from it a half-filled white paper packet, and hurriedly placed it in the waistcoat pocket of the senseless man beside him.

The next moment the death-like silence that again prevailed was abruptly broken by a loud cry for help, so loud that it reached the ears of the cyclist who, more like a phantom than a man, was scorching at a mad pace down the dark road.

In an instant all was confusion within the house. Frightened men and women servants, some half-dressed, others carrying lights, rushed down the stairs into the hall.

"Help—thieves—help!"

As the cry rang out a second time, Esther Mansfield, her face white with terror, a light robe hurriedly thrown about her, descended the stairs. She followed the group of servants who, guided by the shouts, were crowding into the study. The lights fell upon the open safe; upon Seaton Revelle, who knelt beside and gripped a prostrate figure.

"Robbery!" he cried, "there were two of them—it was dark—one's escaped—but I've got the other. Quick, some one go for the police!"

Snatching a light from one of the shivering servants, he brought it close to the death-hued face of the man stretched on the floor.

"My God!" he cried, dashing a hand across his eyes. "It can't be! Yes! It—it's Alec Scarsdale!"

The next instant a shrill, piteous shriek—a girlish cry of anguish—rang out from behind the amazed and dumb-stricken servants, and Esther Mansfield fell to the ground in a death-like swoon.

A few minutes later the faint clatter of horse's hoofs rang out. One of the servants was riding off in hot haste to summon the police.

CHAPTER IV.

An infamous lie.

WHEN Alec Scarsdale, opening his eyes, gazed wildly around him, he was lying on a couch in the study. His head was throbbing fiercely. For a few moments he was but dimly conscious of indistinct and unrecognisable figures hovering round him. It was only when the mist had cleared away from his eyes that the figures resolved themselves into Seaton Revelle, two constables, and John Mansfield, who, his face white with passion, his eyes heavily rimmed, was gazing sternly at him.

"What's happened?" gasped Scarsdale, clasping his burning, scarred forehead, "have—have the scoundrels escaped? I should recognise one of them again, but the other struck me down before—before I could see him."

The two policemen, who had hurried up from the village police-station, exchanged significant glances, John Mansfield had turned from a white to a livid colour.

For a moment there was a death-like silence, ominous as the unnatural calm before the outburst of the storm. Then it was broken by the banker's voice, hoarse and almost inarticulate with rage.

"You! You, whom I have believed in, trusted, —you, who only yesterday dared to tell me you loved my child—Ah, it's too much! I can't trust myself to speak!"

Scarsdale's eyes were staring wide. Did he hear aright, or had that blow affected his senses?

"What are you saying?" he breathed out hoarsely. "What do you mean?"

His eyes, still filled with a dazed look of incomprehension, wandered to the faces of the others, then lit up with a flash of horror. Was it possible that they suspected *him!*

"For God's sake, answer me!" He had staggered to his feet, and was glaring wildly at the circle of stern, set faces—"Answer me, someone! Don't all stand staring at me as if *I* had broken into the house, *I* had robbed the safe. Answer me, someone! Mr. Mansfield, Revelle, in God's name, what does this mean?"

The impassioned, desperate question was unanswered. Only a freezing silence!

With a gasp, Alec reeled back, the hideous truth staring him in the face. It was no nightmare, then! It was no dream from which he would awaken, but horrible reality.

One of the constables stepping forward—tapped him on the shoulder.

Scarsdale started as if stung by an asp. Then, maddened beyond control, scarcely conscious of what he did, he struck the constable a blow that sent him reeling backward.

"Hands off!" he shouted fiercely. "You're mad—all of you! It's a lie; an infamous lie!"

"A lie?" thundered John Mansfield. "Do you think I would allow you to be arrested if there was a shadow of doubt—you who were caught in the act, the open safe before you, the very key in your hand! Constables, do your duty."

The two policemen sprang upon him. This time, he did not resist, utterly stunned.

"Caught in the act," he muttered, like a man who talks in his sleep; "the safe open before me, the key in my hand!" He raised his fettered hands and covered his face. "Why, you are all mad. It was I who came down and caught the scoundrels in the act of robbing the safe!"

"Look here," said one of the policemen roughly, "you can tell all that to the magistrate." Then, turning to the banker—"You'll be good enough, sir, to come along to the station and prefer the charge, and the gentleman," glancing at Seaton Revelle, "who collared him, will come too."

Every word spoken seemed to add a fresh mesh to the net that was mercilessly being drawn around him.

"Revelle, they say you caught me in the act. Tell them it is a mistake—all a mistake!"

Seaton Revelle took a step towards him, and, without flinching, a hard light shining from out his dark eyes, stared him straight in the face.

"You scoundrel;" he said deliberately, "don't appeal to me. You know well enough what has happened!"

Scarsdale drew in a deep breath. His brain was working

like lightning now. Something—one of those indefinable instincts that sometimes come to us—told him that the man who stood before him, staring him calmly in the face, was the cause of all his present misery.

"You've lied!" he gasped, "you are lying now!"

Revelle shrugged his shoulders.

Scarsdale, cut to the quick, maddened beyond all control, swiftly raised his handcuffed hands above his head; but, before they could descend, the constables had flung themselves upon him.

"Here, none of that!" cried one of them.

The spasm of passion, that had momentarily convulsed and had over-mastered him, had passed away. He drew himself up to his full height.

"I tell you," he said, his grey eyes flashing fiercely, fastened on John Mansfield. "I tell you I'm innocent, completely innocent of this charge, I'm the victim of coincidence, or—or conspiracy!"

Every eye was fastened upon him. No one noticed the door open, nor the silent figure that, with face as white as marble, stood on the threshold. Scarsdale's back was half turned to the door.

"I tell you," he cried, as the hot, passionate blood again surged to his forehead, pointing an accusing finger at Seaton Revelle, "that that man has perjured himself. Oh, God!"—his voice broke and faltered—"am I alone? Does no one believe me innocent?"

"Yes—yes, I do! I—I believe you innocent!"

The words, piteous in their intensity, rang out with startling abruptness from the threshold. Every face was turned in the direction whence they had come.

There, white as death, her great, dark eyes dilated with a look of wild grief, her whole frame quivering, stood Esther. Then, before her father could prevent her, she sprang forward and flung her arms round Scarsdale's neck.

"Alec, Alec," she sobbed, "I know it can't be true, I know it can't be true!"

It was a dramatic scene. The graceful, sobbing girl clinging to the stalwart, well-knit, handcuffed figure; the helmeted police; Seaton Revelle, a shadow on his handsome face; John Mansfield, quivering and grey with passion.

"Esther," whispered Scarsdale, no longer conscious of the presence of the others, "thank God for this! I must go. Who knows, the truth of this night's work may yet come to light. Your love, your belief, will give me strength to fight the future. God bless you, my darling. Good-bye!"

He kissed her gently on the forehead. With a piteous cry she staggered from him, and, sinking down on the couch where he had lain, buried her face in her arms. He cast a long look at her quivering form. Then he steadied himself, and, turning to the constables, said: "I'm ready."

CHAPTER V.

At the Police-Station.

It was past four o'clock in the morning, and the grey light of dawn was already tingeing the sky when Scarsdale, handcuffed and firmly gripped on either side by the constables, was marched along the road to the police-station. The cool air beat upon his fevered brow, and seemed to enable him to collect his thoughts; but even now it seemed more like a fantastic dream than reality. Again he lived through all that had taken place from the moment he had left his room, roused by a faint, suspicious sound, arising from below, to when he had recovered consciousness to find himself overwhelmed by a hideous accusation. And the more he thought, the greater the darkness of his despair. How would it all end? If John Mansfield, who had known him so long, and had trusted him, believed him guilty, what would the outside world say? What would be the verdict of the judge and jury that he would have to face? He was a strong man, a brave man, but he shuddered at the thought. Even now, he did not know the damning strength of the evidence that would be brought against him.

But he was not without hope. He had seen the face of one of the men—the man on whom the light of the candle had fallen as he stood, motionless as a statue, beside the open safe. It had only been a momentary glimpse, but the features were deeply imprinted on his memory—a sharp, clean-shaven face, with upturned nose and small eyes. If only that man could be found!

Once within the police-station Scarsdale was unceremoniously pushed into a small, railed-off partition facing the sergeant, who sat at a desk, John Mansfield and Seaton Revelle standing beside him. The banker stated the charge; then Seaton Revelle, never faltering, never at a loss for a word, gave a concise account of all that had happened.

He stated how, aroused by a suspicious sound, he had crept downstairs, and had discovered two men in the act of robbing the safe. He had rushed upon them. The light had been extinguished before he could see their faces. He had closed with one of the men and had stunned him with a blow. The other had escaped. It was only when lights had been brought in, that he had recognised Scarsdale.

Scarsdale, convulsively gripping the rail in front of him, could scarcely believe his own ears. It was all a horrible tissue of lies from beginning to end! Yet how was he to disprove it? A wild desire seized him to break loose, to fling himself upon him, to wring the truth from his lying throat! But he mastered himself. He must not lose his self-control. Perhaps he might glean something, find some flaw that would prove the falsity of his evidence.

"I suppose," said the sergeant, addressing Seaton Revelle, "you didn't see the face, can give no description of the other man?"

"When I entered the room, his back was turned. I never saw his face. I only noticed that he was tall and thin."

Another lie! The man Scarsdale had seen was short.

"Now," said the sergeant, turning to Scarsdale, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

He told his story. There was a look of incredulity on the sergeant's face as he listened.

"Will you explain," he said, when Scarsdale had finished, "how you came to be fully dressed at past two o'clock in the morning?"

"I was restless, not inclined for bed. I was reading when I heard the first sounds."

"Can you offer any explanation of the fact that the key of the safe was found in your hand?"

"Only that the man who stunned me"—Scarsdale fastened his eyes on Seaton Revelle—"placed it there!"

The sergeant asked no more questions, but ordered the prisoner to be taken to a cell and carefully searched. They hurried him out of sight none too gently.

The sergeant turned to Mr. Mansfield.

"Your keys, sir, were with you when you went to bed?"

"Yes. I invariably place them under my pillow at night!"

"Are you a heavy sleeper?"

"Not as a rule; but——" the banker gave a start, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him—"Revelle, do you remember me remarking that my whisky had a peculiar taste?"

"Yes."

"And Scarsdale mixed it for me. That accounts for my heavy sleep, my racking headache. My drink must have been drugged!"

A policeman was returning from the passage leading to the

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cells. He was carrying a knife, some loose coin, a cigar-case, and a small, white paper packet.

"We've searched the prisoner," he said, "and this is all we found upon him."

Taking the packet from him, the Sergeant poured out a small portion of its contents—a white powder—into the palm of his hand, smelt it, and then placed a few grains on the tip of his tongue.

"We'll have this powder analysed, Mr. Mansfield," he said, "it looks very much as if you had been drugged."

When John Mansfield left the station, Seaton Revelle was supporting him.

"Esther!" half sobbed the old man, "my poor, poor child!"

Alec Scarsdale was alone in his cell, pacing to and fro with a feverish, monotonous stride. His thoughts were almost unbearable. He threw himself down on the plank bed, and closed his eyes, but he could get no relief, only seeming to realise more acutely. Again and again, thinking of Esther, as he had seen her moaning on that couch, he murmured her name. She alone believed in him—the one gleam of light in all that hideous darkness. What if she should lose her belief? When she had heard the damning evidence in all its fulness, would she still stand firm?

Then another feeling—a feeling of fierce hate—came over him. He clenched his teeth when he thought of the smooth, lying scoundrel who brought it all about. Yes, Seaton Revelle *must* have been one of the two men who had robbed the safe; he had no proof, and yet instinct told him it must be so. If only that other man could be caught and brought to justice!

When the constable entered the cell, Scarsdale feverishly turned upon him.

"Any news of the other man?" he asked anxiously, "any news?"

"Not yet," was the gruff answer, "but if you think your mate's going to get clear with the spoil, and put your share on one side till you've done your little bit of time, and come out, you're mistaken. We shall nab him, right enough!"

And having given a quick glance round, the policeman left the cell, and slammed to the door.

CHAPTER VI.

How a Stranger Aroused the Suspicions of the Landlord of the "Crown and Cushion," and whom he Proved to be!

The "Crown and Cushion," the inn at which Benjamin Beard had made a brief stay, was an old-fashioned hostelry. The morning following Scarsdale's arrest saw tap-room, bar, and bar-parlour, crowded. There was only one topic of conversation—the sensational robbery at "Woodlands," the name of John Mansfield's residence. The excitement was intense, and the consumption of liquor great. Most of the facts were known. A servant from "Woodlands" had visited the inn, and had been the centre of interest. "Guilty" was the almost unanimous verdict brought against Scarsdale by those gathered there. But what of the unknown accomplice? An arrest had already been made, but the individual proved a conclusive *alibi*, and had been released.

Conversation was in full swing round the bar, when a bicyclist rode up leisurely, and dismounted outside the inn.

He was a little man of homely aspect, with a kindly face, and a pair of small, cheery eyes. Though his hair was quite grey and he was well past the meridian of life, there was a certain youthfulness about his bearing. A knapsack was slung on his back. Removing his cap to wipe his forehead the little man revealed a bald spot on his head, not unlike a priest's tonsure.

"A most enjoyable spin," he said to himself, "most. I think I am entitled to a half-pint of shandy-gaff!"

Excited, loud voices reached him from the inn.

"There seems to be a very animated discussion going on," he said to himself as he entered.

"Good morning to you!" he said amiably to the landlord, and ordered his shandy-gaff.

John Goodman, the landlord, was at that moment thinking of the unknown, mysterious accomplice so badly wanted by the police. He eyed the little man rather suspiciously.

"Come far, sir?" said Goodman, eyeing the knapsack now, and thinking of bank notes and diamonds.

"No," answered the little man, "done about twenty miles, not more; but it has been glorious riding. Lovely country!"

The crime of the previous night was being discussed on every side. The little man's homely face began to assume a look of mild interest.

"A burglary in this neighbourhood?" he asked of the landlord.

"Do you mean to say you've not heard of the robbery up at the 'Woodlands,' and the arrest of Mr. Scarsdale?"

"No, indeed!"

The landlord, eyeing him suspiciously, gave a brief account of the crime.

The little man's look of interest deepened.

"H'm!" he ejaculated, half to himself, "H'm!"—then addressing the landlord—"Yes, from what you've told me the evidence certainly does seem dead against Scarsdale; but I must say that I don't quite see his motive. He was, you tell me, supposed to be engaged to Miss Mansfield. He was in a good and confidential position. You would have thought, too, if he had wanted money—presuming that he did—that being in a bank and in a confidential position, he would have adopted a less crude and less risky method than burglary. In any case, it is very painful, very sad."

The little man was thinking now of Miss Mansfield.

"Yes," said the landlord, "it's sad; but it's as clear as a pike-staff! You're a stranger to these parts, then?"

"Yes. Quite. I'm just making a little tour, taking it very gently. My scorching days are over!"

The landlord stepped out of the bar and disappeared.

The little man's eyes twinkled merrily, as though his sense of humour had been tickled.

A few moments later, an ostler hurried away from the back of the inn towards the police-station. Presently he returned, accompanied by two policemen.

The landlord, a look of suppressed excitement on his face, had returned to the bar.

There was a sudden hush as the two constables entered quickly.

The only person who seemed unconcerned was the little man. His face was buried in a pewter mug. His eyes were twinkling like stars.

The landlord winked at the constables and indicated the little man with a jerk of his thumb.

One of the constables, a strapping young fellow, with an open, ingenuous countenance, tapped the little man on the shoulder. He put down the pewter and turned. The homely face lit up all over with a look of unexpected delight.

"Freddie!" he cried. "Well I never! So they've drafted you down here!"

"Uncle!" cried the young constable; then laughed loudly.

He turned round to the landlord, who was looking rather sheepish.

"Goodman," he said, "you've made a mistake this time. Do you know who this suspicious person is?"

"No!" stammered the landlord.

"Mr. Crump, late chief inspector of Scotland Yard!"

[Another instalment of this splendid story will appear in next Tuesday's "Short Stories." The incidents depicted in the sketches which appeared in the little leaflet, and which are appearing on the covers of "Short Stories," will be dealt with shortly.]

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A Cross Road Courtship.

A Pretty Tale Illustrating that "All is not Gold that Glitters."

With scarce a sound, a large 24 h.p. tonneau sped along the deserted highway at something over the legal limit. Its sole occupant, a young man, leather capped and jacketed, who leant over the wheel, seemed intent only upon outstripping the ever-lengthening cloud of white dust that marked his passage. Totally oblivious of the beautiful country he was passing, his attention was occupied solely with the narrow strip of road he was traversing.

Up hill and down hill at the same even pace sped the car, till from the summit of a rise, a sign post, with extended arm, appeared in the valley below, some fifty yards ahead. In the wooded valley, hidden from view, lay the cross road. A jarring, discordant hoot warned wayfarers, if such there were, of the approaching car.

Mingling with the sound of the motor-horn came another sound; the cry of a frightened girl. An instant later a bicycle wobbled across the path of the approaching car, cleared it with an inch to spare, and deposited its terror-stricken rider safely in the ditch.

To disengage the clutch, clap on the brake, and bring the car to a sudden stand, that nearly jerked the driver from his seat, was but the work of a second. The next he was lifting the huddled, sobbing heap of distressed beauty from the ditch.

"I do hope that you are not hurt!" he exclaimed, as he deposited his trembling burden on a bank by the roadside. "I shall never forgive myself for having been the cause of your accident."

"Oh, no, I am not hurt one little bit!" was the reassuring reply, as she still clung to the supporting arm. "And it wasn't your fault. I was frightened, and that wretched bicycle wouldn't stop to let me get off."

Never had the motor-man looked on anything so fair as the mud-stained, bedraggled girl who sat beside him, hatless, a wealth of golden hair falling about her shoulders, and smiling through her tears. Speech forsook him, and so to relieve the constraint which grew upon him, as he gazed at his victim, he busied himself removing the outward sign of disaster from coat and skirt, with a square yard of spotless cambric.

The process finished, all too soon, and not without some pretty protest, the motor-man bethought him reluctantly of the urgent necessity of conveying his victim to her home, and that with all dispatch.

"Where do you live, Miss——?" he asked somewhat awkwardly.

"Clare Summerfield," was the smiling reply to the half asked question. "Mother and I are stopping at the Rosary, near Four Cross, about two miles from here."

Clare's answer also implied a question, but this the unknown motorist appeared not to understand. Without revealing his identity he continued—

"I must drive you home; we can find room for the bicycle inside the car."

"Oh, my hair!" cried Clare, noticing its state of freedom for the first time, "and where's my hat?"

The young man groped in the ditch, whilst with a few deft turns the girl adroitly restored her fallen tresses to their more conventional state.

"You can't possibly wear this," said the young man, holding up the recovered straw, from the interior of which trickled a steady stream of liquid mud. For a moment he held his own leather cap in his hand as if about to offer it, then seized with a sudden idea, dived into some mysterious recess in the body of the motor-car, and returned with a cloth cap.

"This at least is dry," he remarked as he handed it to Clare.

Whilst the girl adjusted the cap he stripped off his leather jacket and held it out invitingly. Shivering with cold, and only partially recovered from the recent shock, Clare passed her arms half way through the long sleeves, and submitted silently to the buttoning up process; rendered lengthy by reason of the trembling fingers which performed it.

Her toilet complete, a pair of strong arms lifted the girl on to the box seat of the car, a rug was wrapped about her knees, and her bicycle placed inside. The unknown motorist mounted and the homeward journey commenced.

An unaccountable silence had fallen on the pair, and by the time the Rosary was in sight, scarcely a word had been exchanged.

But ere the cottage gate was fairly reached the silence was broken.

"Clare, my darling, what have you been doing?" cried an anxious voice. "What a figure to come home!"

Rightly judging the owner of the voice to be the mother of his victim, the young man explained the situation. And with such respectful bearing and genuine concern did he tell the story of the morning's adventure, that he won the heart of the mother as completely as the daughter had won his.

"Depend upon it, Clare, he's a somebody," Mrs. Summerfield remarked, the moment car and driver were out of hearing. "Only wealthy people drive motor-cars. Did you notice the crest, dear? And such a manner, too. Now I wonder who he is?"

The cloth cap which still rested upon Clare's golden tresses suggested a possible clue, and to this her mother turned her attention. A critical search revealed the letter L., interwoven with the lining.

"There!" cried the lady triumphantly. "That is something. Now we must find out all about the young men in these parts who have L. for an initial."

That afternoon whilst Clare rested, her mother studied a well worn "Debrett," and not without startling and gratifying results.

"My dear," said the elder lady in an awed whisper, when her daughter descended for tea, "I've found out all about him. He's the Earl of Langfield! Listen!" She read with suppressed excitement from a turned down page, "Langfield, Richard George D'Eastcourt, eleventh earl. Langfield,

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Berkshire; How Fell, Yorkshire; Rigg, County Down, Ireland, and 145, Grosvenor Square, London."

"But how do you know he is an earl?" asked Clare. "Many men have L. for an initial, and they can't all be earls."

"I'm certain of it," was the confident reply. "Langfield is only five miles from here, and one of the show places of the county, I found that out in the local guide. Then there's the crest. Do you remember that, Clare? Well, here's a picture of it."

Clare read the half column of "Debrett" carefully, studied the coat of arms minutely, and admitted that the identity of the unknown motor-man was established beyond a doubt.

"Only twenty-four years old, owns 11,000 acres in Berkshire, two other country places, and a house in Grosvenor Square. One of our few unmarried peers. Clare, think of that!"

For the first time since circumstances had compelled the mother and daughter to vacate a small West Kensington flat, in favour of Coronation guests, and seek refuge in the furnished Berkshire cottage, the good lady recognised the guiding hand of Providence.

Whilst still discussing the morning's adventure, and all that it might lead to, the sound of a motor-horn warned the two ladies that the subject of their eager speculation was at hand.

Up the rose-lined gravel path strode the driver of the car, a huge bouquet of hot-house flowers in his hand, and a look of anxious expectation on his face.

"I felt so concerned about Miss Summerfield that I really could not keep away," he commenced, depositing the floral tribute on the table beside him

"Really, Lord Langfield, this is most thoughtful of you," replied the proud mother, eager to apprise his lordship at the earliest opportunity that his identity was no longer a secret.

The young man looked surprised, almost startled in fact, at the sound of his name.

"Clare is better," the lady continued; then, after a pause, "but unfortunately she is likely to be in the house for some days, her ankle is sprained."

"Oh! mother," Clare began, not having heard of the sprained ankle till that moment.

"But she will not admit it," interrupted the diplomatic mother. "Clare is a regular little Spartan."

Greedily the youth swallowed the bait. Placed himself and his motor-car at the entire disposal of the ladies, and begged to be allowed to take them for a drive on the morrow. A favour which was granted after some show of reluctance.

"Did you ever see such a modest young man?" asked the elder lady when for the second time that day the motor-car had left the gate. "Why, he positively blushed when I gave him his proper title!"

That night the good lady penned half-a-dozen letters to as many intimate friends in town, enlarging on the joys of their country life, the agreeable society which had opened its arms to them, and hinting, in an exasperatingly mysterious manner, that some highly interesting news might shortly be expected concerning dear Clare.

During the next few days a motor-car emblazoned with the Langfield coat-of-arms, carrying a young man and a girl on the box, and an elderly and somewhat nervous lady in the tonneau, might have been seen in many parts of Berkshire.

As time went on the occupants of the car were reduced to two in number, the girl who was learning to drive it, and the young man who guided her hand.

These two preferred the quiet country lanes and a slow sedate pace, to high roads and racing speed. Often might they have been seen despoiling a richly laden hedge of its wealth of wild roses and honeysuckle, whilst the motor stood unheeded and immovable. But most favoured of all spots was the bank by the sign post which marked the cross-road where they had first met.

When not driving Clare about the country, the youth was a constant visitor at the cottage. Concerning himself he never spoke, and this, the ambitious mother attributed to becoming modesty. Then he lingered in the country when all the world was in town, and saw nothing of society save that of the two ladies, which were circumstances of too fortunate a nature to call for comment.

So the weeks sped, the mother patient and tactful, Clare expectant, and the undeclared lover forging fresh links to his fetters day by day.

One afternoon Clare arrived home with a tell tale blush upon her dimpled cheeks. Contrary to his usual habit the youth refused to enter the cottage, and departed with an undignified display of haste.

"Clare, tell me quick!" cried her mother. "You don't mean to say you have been so mad as to refuse him?"

Clare hastened to reassure her mother, and tell her, as much as she thought fit, of the interview at the cross-road.

"He really is an awkward boy at times," the lady remarked, with a sigh of relief. "To think of his rushing off like that, you can't tell what a shock he gave me. Then to think of his never asking me first. I can't understand why he hasn't been snapped up before. I'm sure any designing woman could twist him round her finger."

"Clare, my dear," continued the mother after a thoughtful pause, "do you know I think it might be a wise thing to send you away for a time, if only to give him an opportunity of writing to you. Yes, I will write to your aunt Julia to-night."

But the letter to aunt Julia was never written.

That evening, for the first time since his acquaintance with the ladies at the Rosary, the accepted lover failed to put in an appearance. Nor was the familiar sound of the motor-horn heard at the cottage door next day.

"My dear, this is most trying," the elder lady remarked as the afternoon of the long day spent in anxious speculation drew to a close. "I can't call upon him, we have never been to Langfield, and it would be just as undignified to write. before he has called and asked my sanction. Even if he has met with an accident he should have sent a message."

Clare was silent.

"Suppose we go and call on the vicar's wife," her mother suggested. "I owe her a call, and if anything has happened she may have heard of it."

Anything to relieve the growing tension was acceptable, and, with but brief regard to toilet, the two anxious women were soon walking rapidly towards the village.

The village was in a flutter of excitement. On the green stood a large marquee, wherein was being held the annual flower-show.

And at the door of the tent, surrounded by a crowd of idlers, stood the well-known motor-car!

As mother and daughter paused irresolute, a fair young man came out of the tent, sprang into the car and seized the wheel. From behind the car hurried its accustomed driver, who touched his cap respectfully to the man on the box, and sat down at his feet, half in and half out of the car.

The idlers cheered, the man at the wheel raised his hat, and the car dashed off in the direction of Langfield.

"Can you tell me the name of the gentleman driving that motor-car?" the elder lady asked in a choking voice of a constable who stood close by.

"Yes, mum, that's the Earl of Langfield; he came home quite sudden last night. Been away a year," was the reply.

"And the other man?"

"That's Tom Bowers, the postman's son. His lordship's driver, and a clever young chap too."

"You are quite sure it was the earl who was driving?"

"Bless you, yes, lady, there's no mistaking him!"

So full of conviction was the tone of the constable that not a vestige of doubt remained in the mind of either of his hearers.

All through the night two distracted women packed, and not till the troubled waters of the Channel rolled between them and the scene of their discomfiture did they rest

A. Clarke Little.

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FROM 3 P.M. TO 3 A.M.

The Story of a Burglary.

PROLOGUE.

"I PRESUME you take the usual precautions to insure the safety of these valuables?"

"Precautions? Not I! I believe the man who takes the least precaution enjoys the greatest immunity from midnight marauders, while he who secures his valuables behind bolts and bars, locks and double locks, excites, by these very precautions, the cupidity of the housebreaker. I have been a householder for upwards of five-and-twenty years; have as fine a collection of plate as any in St. John's Wood, leave my money about in all sorts of queer places, and have never yet been honoured by a visit from one of these gentlemen."

The man who thus boasted of the valuable nature of his possessions and the insecurity of his front door was Matthew Daunton—senior partner in the well-known firm of Daunton and Davies, tea-brokers, of Mincing Lane. He was not—as one might very naturally have supposed from the foregoing speech—either a windbag or an idiot, but was considered, by all who knew him, a sharp practical man of business. He had, it is true, delivered himself thus in the publicity of a compartment on the Central London Railway. But the speech was addressed to his trusty partner, Mr. Wilfred Davies, and he had first assured himself that no one else was within earshot—at least, no one likely to be interested in the matter. A girl was sitting not far off, with pale face and bent head, her thin hands clasped together in her lap, but she appeared to pay but little heed to the conversation.

"By the way," said Davies, after a brief pause, "I suppose you know nothing of the whereabouts of your son, Gerald?"

The girl started visibly, and the thin hands clutched convulsively in her lap. Fortunately the involuntary movement was not observed, and she stealthily turned her large blue eyes toward the man addressed. He was a tall, severe-looking figure, with iron-grey hair and sharply-defined features. The look of habitual severity on his face deepened at the question.

"No," he replied curtly. "Nor do I wish to know anything of the scapegrace. I have buried that story these four years, Davies, and have no wish to hear it revived."

An indignant flush overspread the girl's face, and a look, half-angry, half-sorrowful, came into her eyes.

"Humph!" ejaculated Davies. "That is our one point of disagreement, Daunton. I said you were in the wrong at the time, and I'll stick to it to the last."

A soft, shy glance of gratitude shot from the girl's eyes, but the stern-faced old man made no reply.

"Heigho!" continued Davies with a sigh, half-humorous, half-pathetic, "what a topsy-turvy world this is, to be sure! Here am I who would have given a cool ten thousand pounds for a son like yours, and never grudged a penny of it—and I am father of none. And you—who have one—value the possession so lightly that you cast him out into the streets without a shilling in his pocket!"

Still the old man made no reply, but sat, with set face, staring straight before him. The girl sighed and turned away her head. Presently the men began to talk again, but this time it was of matters wholly connected with their business. At the next station the girl alighted, and, ascending to the busy thoroughfare above, a little after three o'clock on a wintry afternoon, was soon swallowed up in the seething multitude of the great Metropolis.

CHAPTER I.

"He *Shall* Not Die!"

THE short, cheerless afternoon had deepened into night, and a thick mantle of damp fog hung like a pall over the great city, when a woman turned into a narrow street in the vicinity of Marylebone, and, entering one of the dingy tenements it contained, ascended the dark, narrow staircase to an upper floor. She pushed open the door of a back room and entered. There was no light, save that of the fire burning in the grate. As she entered a man rose from a low stool by the fire, and went towards her.

"You must be tired, dear," he said, helping her off with her cloak and placing a chair for her by the fire.

"I think I am just a little tired," she said with a smile. "But that is only a trifle. A cup of tea will soon put me right again. Oh, how nice it is to be home!" And she laid her pale cheek against her husband's shoulder, and rested there for a few moments in silence.

"Home!" he said bitterly. But she laid her hand gently on his lips, and he was silent.

"Poor old boy!" she said, after a brief pause. "You have had another disappointing day, haven't you?"

"Yes," he said, in a dry, hard voice. "It is nothing else than disappointment—cruel, bitter, heart-breaking disappointment! How is it all to end?"

"Hush, dear!" said the woman, smoothing his short, crisp, curly hair with her thin hand. "We must be patient and brave. Perhaps the end is nearer than we expect. I often think how we shall laugh at these dark days of anxiety and dread when they shall be nothing more than a memory of the unhappy past. And yet we shall not always laugh either, for we shall ever bear them a tender thought, since they have knit us closer together in the bond of love than ever could have been accomplished under the smile of prosperity."

"Brave little woman!" said the man, drawing her towards him and kissing her tenderly. "You never complain, though God knows you have reason enough to do so!"

Presently the woman turned.

"Where is Eric?" she asked.

"He is asleep on the couch," the man replied in a low voice. "Poor little chap! He seems very poorly to-night."

The woman went quickly over to one corner of the dark room, and, kneeling down on the bare floor, listened to the low, fitful breathing of a child—a pretty, pale-faced, blue-eyed,

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flaxen-haired boy of three. Then she rose and returned to her husband.

"If he should grow worse," she said decisively, "we must call in a doctor."

"But the fee!" exclaimed the man anxiously.

"We must get the money somewhere," responded the woman earnestly. "It must—it shall be procured by some means or other!" And the colour sprang into her pale cheeks and her blue eyes blazed with the fire of determined resolve.

The man sighed and turned towards the fire.

"Sit down, dear," he said, gently forcing her into the chair he had placed for her, "and tell me all your news. I suppose you have met with no success?"

"No immediate success," she answered. "But the editors were very kind indeed, and one has promised to read my two stories and communicate with me in a few days as to the result. Let us hope his verdict will bring us what we so much need."

"Did the Oxford Street firm pay you for your sewing?" inquired the man.

"Yes. I went there first. It was so piercingly cold that I disdained the time-honoured but draughty 'bus for the warmth and ease of the 'Twopenny Tube.'" She paused for an instant, and then continued gravely: "There were two gentlemen with me in the carriage, and I overheard their conversation."

The man looked up inquiringly from his seat on the low stool by his wife's side.

"One was your father, dear," she went on, "and the other was his partner."

The young man rose to his feet with an exclamation of surprise.

"You saw him?" he asked.

"Yes, dear. They spoke of you. Mr. Davies told your father boldly that he had done you an injustice—that he had always affirmed it, and that he would always affirm it."

"And my father—what said he?"

"Dear Gerald," said the girl, laying her hand soothingly on his arm, "the day of your father's forgiveness has not yet come. He is still unrelenting. But rest assured, dear Gerald, that one day you will both be reconciled—perhaps before very long. He looks very old and grey—altogether different from what you have pictured him to me as he was four years ago It seems cruel to treat you—his son—his only son—with so much harshness. And he boasted"—she added bitterly—"of his plate and his possessions, and the careless way in which he left his money about the house, with no more security than he would keep his coals."

The man started, and looked into the face of his wife. But he spoke no word, and the girl continued:

"It is hard for you, Gerald dear, but we must bear it bravely and wait for the time that is coming—that must come before long."

Thus, with gentle tones and hopeful words, she soothed the rising rebellion in her husband's breast against the father who had disowned him—words which were not altogether the utterance of her own heart, as the occasional flash of indignant anger which gleamed in her blue eyes gave ample testimony. But she conquered her own feelings—as she so often did—for his sake, and soothed him, when she herself as sorely needed the same gracious influence in her own breast.

Presently the man rose.

"I am restless," he said. "I shall run out for an hour and walk it off."

"All right," responded the girl, wisely judging it best for him that he should do so.

Gerald took up his hat and walked towards the door. He hesitated half-way, and came back quickly to his wife's side. She rose to meet him, and he took her in his arms—folding her fiercely to his breast.

"Would to God I could get something to do!" he groaned, "for your sake and—for Eric's!"

Kissing her passionately, he released her, and she heard his footfall down the long flight of stairs till he passed out into the street below.

"For my sake and—for Eric's!" she repeated. "For Eric's!"

She bent again over the sleeping child and listened. He turned uneasily in his sleep, and muttered a childish phrase. The mother lit a candle which stood on the mantelpiece, and held it above the childish form. The cheeks—until now so pale and white—were flushed with fever. The forehead was damp, and the little transparent hands moved restlessly upon the coverlet. A dreadful fear came into the mother's heart as she watched him, and she caught her breath involuntarily, while her wide eyes dilated with a new-born terror. Then she went back to her seat by the fire and tried to think. All the misery of the bitter joyless past rose up before her—Gerald's youthful extravagances—his father's anger—and then—when that had only partially subsided—the revelation that his son, for whom he had been so ambitious, had engaged himself to a penniless unknown girl. She remembered the scene that had followed, the choice of two courses offered to the son by a relentless father—the indignant refusal to obey his father's wishes—and the angry dismissal from his father's house, never to return.

And Gerald had married her. All through those four long years of patient struggle with the world, they had comforted and helped each other in the daily battle for bread—and they had not complained. But darker days than they had hitherto known had come upon them. Gerald could obtain no employment, and their scanty resources had now come to an end. But all this was as nothing compared with that other and more terrible dread which now oppressed her heart. Eric—her own Eric! She could not bear to lose him—her son—her firstborn! The thought maddened her. No—she could not—she would not lose her little Eric!

"He shall not die! He shall not die!" she said in a low, fierce whisper.

Yet what could she do? He needed a doctor, it was clear. Yet she could not pay his fee. Her darling stood in need of nice things—all those dainty delicacies which tempt the appetite and help so materially to strengthen the invalid. But she was powerless to obtain them for him. And then the thought of who it was that had wrought this terrible poverty and distress came upon her with tenfold force, and the angry blood tinged her pale face anew. She saw again that stern, set face and heard the cruel words of the old man, and her heart hardened towards him as it had never done before.

"And he boasted of his possessions, and the insecurity with which he kept them!" she said bitterly. "His curiosities and his plate—his very money—lying about for anyone who cared to carry it off! And we—his son—his son's son—are here—so near—and yet—starving—perhaps—perhaps dying!"

She sat staring into the fading firelight till Gerald returned. They spoke but little, for their hearts were heavy and their thoughts were too busy for speech. It had but just struck the hour of ten when they laid their heads upon their scanty pillows, to seek the rest and repose which they so much needed. And one of the two, at least, was soon asleep—forgetful, for a little space, of the disappointments and hardships—the suffering and sorrow—of the day that had passed and that which was to come.

CHAPTER II.
The Burglar.

IT was six o'clock that same evening when the senior partner in the firm of Daunton and Davies let himself in at the front door of his elegant house in St. John's Wood. He was not in the best of humours, and vented his irritation by complaining of his dinner and reprimanding his domestics. Dinner over, he went, as was his custom, to the library and seated himself before the fire—a lonely old man—with no companionship save that of his own reflections. He felt

miserable and dejected, though he could not tell why. There were no bright faces to welcome him, no words of love or happy laughter to greet him on his return, it is true. But he was surrounded by every conceivable aid to his comfort and ease, could command every luxury he desired, and, in all other respects, was looked upon as an enviable man. But, to-night, the bright glancing fire that glowed in the grate failed to warm his heart with its ruddy influence—the generous wine he had imbibed at dinner had proved altogether powerless to dissipate his fit of despondency, and his pipe—man's universal baby-bottle — had as signally failed to restore his mental tranquillity.

He tried to lead his thoughts into pleasanter channels, but, despite all his efforts, the memory of the past — that miserable haunting past — rose up accusingly before him. Yet had he been less than just? Was not punishment the righteous sequel to wilfulness and disobedience? Duty was a stern monitor, but he had faithfully fulfilled its obligations, and had punished the guilty offender—though that offender had been his own son—justly, and without mercy.

Without mercy! The words repeated themselves in his ear, and struck him with a new significance. Without mercy! What did the term convey? Without mercy meant merciless.

Merciless! A thought struck him, and he went over to a bookcase and took down a volume of an encyclopædic dictionary. Turning over the pages he found the word "merciless." Yes, there it was, and he read it aloud:

"Merciless — unfeeling, hard-hearted, pitiless, cruel, unmerciful, savage."

He closed the book with a snap, and shut out the ugly words from his sight. But he could not blot out the remembrance of what he had read.

"Pitiless—cruel—savage!" he muttered. "A pitiless, cruel, savage father!"

His lined, care-worn face grew white under the iron-grey hair, and a startled look came into his eyes.

"My God!" he said hoarsely, "can it be true?"

He sank his head upon his hands and groaned aloud.

"After all these years," he muttered brokenly. "Gerald—is it true? Have I thus earned—by my rigid enforcement of your long punishment—and mine—yes, mine—ten thousand times mine—those terrible titles to the holy name of father? Oh, it cannot be—it cannot be!"

But conscience did not console him. And memory? Did memory refute the awful charge? Alas, no! A sweet, appealing face—the face of his long-dead wife—rose up before him out of the mist of the past, and the accusing voice grew louder and more importunate within him.

It was eleven o'clock when he retired to his own room—tossed on a stormy sea of doubt and uncertainty, sorrow and remorse—and lay, with wide-open eyes and aching head, staring into the darkness before him. After an hour he fell asleep, and dream of the happy, bygone days, when his young wife stood by his side and his wilful Gerald was a merry boy of three.

He was awakened by the sound of a footfall on the lower floor. Knowing that it must be very late, and being curious to discover who could be about at that hour, he got out of bed, attired himself in dressing-gown and slippers, and proceeded cautiously down the wide staircase. When he reached the hall, he stood still and listened. For a few moments no sound broke the stillness which pervaded the dark house. And then—faintly, yet unmistakably—he heard a soft footfall in the library.

Stealthily he approached the door, and, turning the handle noiselessly, entered the room and closed the door behind him. The electric light had been switched on and revealed the figure of a man standing at his writing-table, the drawers of which were open. The man uttered a startled exclamation as he beheld the figure of Matthew Daunton standing, with his back to the door, confronting him. He was somewhat short of stature, slim and handsome. He was attired in a long dark overcoat, which buttoned all the way down to his feet, and a glossy silk hat covered his head. His features were refined and his hands white and shapely. The man's appearance altogether—his dress, his bearing, the pale, handsome face and clear blue eyes—belied his apparent calling.

For some moments the two men confronted each other without speaking. Daunton was the first to break the silence, and he spoke with perfect self-composure.

"It is scarcely necessary to inquire the object of this intrusion," he said coldly.

There was not a trace of cowardice in the man's manner as he met the eyes of the old man before him. But his face was very white, and the thin fingers closed involuntarily over the back of a chair against which he stood.

"I came," he said, "with the intention of relieving you of a few of those valuables which you prize so lightly and of whose insecurity you so openly boast."

The old man started.

"And who, may I inquire, has favoured you with the latter of item of intelligence?"

"That is neither here nor there," replied the man. "I have explained my purpose in entering your house, and that is all that would interest you."

Daunton looked steadily at the man and hesitated.

"Pardon me," he said, with mock politeness, "but perhaps you would not object to satisfy me upon one other point. Your appearance is scarcely consistent with your vocation. Am I right in supposing that this is your maiden effort in the art of housebreaking?"

The young man's face flushed.

"Since you are so good as to inquire," he said, "I may as well confess that your conjecture is perfectly true."

The words were bold, but his voice faltered and the hand which held the chair trembled visibly.

"You are nervous and unstrung," said Daunton, relenting a little. "Will you oblige me by sitting down in that chair?"

The man obeyed without a word, and Daunton eyed him with increasing interest. Four-and-twenty hours before he would have given the man into custody without a second thought, but his self-abasement of the last few hours had not been without its effect. The thought rose up in his mind, even as he stood there, facing the man who had come to rob him—"What if Gerald had come to this—and through his own pitiless unforgiving anger!"

"Tell me," he said, in an altered voice, "how came you to do this thing?"

The man looked with bewildered surprise into the face before him.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered, "but I don't quite understand you?"

"I want you to tell me," replied Daunton gently, "what it was that induced—perhaps"—and he eyed the white face narrowly—"perhaps I should say—what *drove* you to undertake this criminal task to-night?"

The man's eyes flashed and his breast heaved, as he replied:

"What drove me? The greatest forces in life—love, hunger, and the fear of death! Is not that enough? To see our dear ones grow haggard and grey in the grip of poverty and despair; to watch our little ones being slowly but relentlessly snatched from us by the cruel monsters of disease and death—are not these enough to drive even the timid to deeds of crime and shame?"

The old man's face grew very grave, and the image of his absent boy rose up again before his eyes.

"Poor fellow! Poor fellow!" he muttered under his breath.

The young man looked at him in amazement.

"The name of Matthew Daunton is not usually associated with the sentiment of compassion," he said bitterly.

Daunton coloured and regarded the man in some surprise.

"I know not who you are, nor how much, nor how little, you know of me," he said. "But I feel deeply and truly sorry for your position—of that you may be assured; and, to prove the truth of this assertion, I give you my word of honour that I will take no proceedings against you for your unlawful entry into my house this night. And if you will oblige me by accepting a small temporary loan"—and he took a crisp £10 Bank of England note from a private drawer in his writing-table—"I shall be happy to advance it without any formality in the matter of security."

The man started to his feet in mute astonishment. The blood rushed to his white face, and receded as quickly as it had come, while he swayed to and fro as if about to fall. Then, with a low, inarticulate cry, he fell back into the chair and covered his face with his hands. As he did so, his hat—which had hitherto covered his head—fell to the floor, and a long, bright coil of wavy golden hair fell over the rounded shoulders and gleamed in the light of the electric lamps.

Matthew Daunton uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Good God!" he exclaimed; "it is a woman!"

He looked helplessly at her for some moments till he had recovered from his astonishment, and then, stepping up to her, he laid a trembling hand upon her shoulder and said brokenly:

"My dear child, I thank God it was to this house you came to-night! What your fate would have been had you gone elsewhere, I tremble to think. But you must promise me here, before you go, that you will never do this thing again. Come to me if you are ever in need, and I will help you; but never, I implore you, run this fearful risk again!" and he pressed the bank-note into her hand.

At the touch of the money the girl rose to her feet, pale and trembling, and stood, with downcast eyes, facing the agitated old man.

"Wait!" she whispered. "I have not yet told you all. My name is your name, for I am Gerald's wife!"

The lined face grew ashy pale as the old man listened to the revelation. His knees shook beneath him, and the girl looked anxiously into his face. With a great effort he controlled himself, and then—with a broken "Thank God!"—he held out his arms and clasped the shrinking girl to his heart. And, in that one brief moment of time, the bitter memory and sorrow of the past were blotted out for ever.

Half an hour later Gerald was awakened from a deep sleep by a vigorous hammering upon the panels of his door, and, rising to inquire into the cause of this unusual disturbance, noticed with astonishment the absence of his wife, and was next rendered speechless with amazement by the following extraordinary epistle:

"16 Landau Gardens, St. John's Wood.

"My Dear Boy,—I am waiting to see you. Wrap the little boy up warmly and bring him with you. Your wife is here already. You will probably discover that your hat and coat are missing, and, as things seem all upside down, it will not be inconsistent if you wear those belonging to your wife. Your remorseful old father,

"Matthew Daunton."

It was three in the morning when Gerald—after an absence of four years—once more entered his father's house, bearing in his arms the child he loved so dearly. The scene that followed needs no description. It is only sufficient to say that, from that hour, life opened anew for Gerald and his wife: that Eric was speedily nursed back into health; and that no shadow ever again came between father and son. But, to this day, the story of the burglary is unsuspected by Gerald Daunton.

Walter J. Mowbray.

Bowser's Memoranda.

He Jots down Many Little Things to Make History.

After Mr. Bowser had smoked his cigar and finished his newspaper the other evening he took a memorandum book from his pocket and began writing in it, and after awhile Mrs. Bowser remarked:

"You seem to have got a new idea. What is it you have been writing in that book for the last three nights?"

"Perhaps I can make you understand," he replied, after the lapse of two or three minutes. "Can you remember what happened to you at ten o'clock in the forenoon day before yesterday?"

"Nothing happened."

"That is, the house didn't catch fire or anyone attempt to murder you, but nevertheless things may have happened which would send a man to prison or clear him of a grave charge. The gravest charge sometimes turns upon the merest trifles. The life of a man in Glasgow was saved the other day because a woman remembered seeing him in an alley at a certain hour."

"And so you are jotting down things to save human life?"

"It may be. At any rate, I have set out to jot down most of the happenings of each day, and no one can say what results may follow. History may be made of some of my memoranda."

"I think you are wasting time over it. If you have an hour to spare, you had better work at that ingrowing toe nail of yours."

"Heavens, woman, must you always lug sore heels, toe nails and porous plasters into a conversation?" shouted Mr. Bowser as a rich, red colour showed in his face.

"But you are complaining of your toe," she protested.

"That may be, but don't mingle toes and brains. But for the diaries and memorandum books left behind by the people of the past, where would our historians have secured their material?"

"And what have you jotted down thus far for the benefit of future history?"

"Nothing of much account, but I have been at work only three days. I think my jotting might help to unravel a few mysteries, however. I will read you what I have written:

"Wednesday.—Arose at the usual hour. Looked out of the window and saw a man passing along, followed by a dog. Man had a disreputable appearance and a furtive look. Usual breakfast. Left the house at the usual hour. Saw a man in the Tube with blue goggles on. He seemed anxious to escape observation. Wonder if there is any connection between him and the man with the dog."

"I think there is," replied Mrs. Bowser. "I think the man with the dog watched outside while the goggle-eyed man sneaked in and drove the dagger to the poor baby's heart."

Mr. Bowser glared at her for a minute, and his hair could be heard curling, but with a powerful effort he restrained himself and continued :

" Thursday.—Arose as usual. Thermometer stood at 45 degrees above zero. Usual slip slop breakfast. Had scarcely left the house when I encountered the furtive looking man again. He had disguised himself, but I knew him at once. His dog was not following him."

" The poor animal had probably got tired out," said Mrs Bowser, who wanted to get even for the " slip slop breakfast."

" Your case will be attended to later on, and I will now read the rest : Had scarcely got on to a 'bus when I saw the man with the goggles. He was greatly perturbed, and it was evident that my presence upset him. I saw a wink pass between him and a man with a wart on his chin. Goggles got off apparently while I was arguing with a man who had stepped on my toes, but I can give the police his description. Arrived home at the usual hour. Mrs. Bowser and the cat in the hall to welcome me."

" Is that all for Thursday ? " asked Mrs. Bowser as he paused.

" Yes."

" Why didn't you add that you kicked the front door open when you arrived and that you told Mrs. Bowser you'd end your days in the poorhouse because you found a broken clothespeg at the gate ? "

" By thunder, woman, you are going too far, too far ! " he shouted as he rose up. " If I sat down here to read a chapter from the Bible, you'd manage to turn it to ridicule. You seem to have less sense as time passes."

" I was just wondering what the future historian would find in your notes to make history on," she quietly replied.

" How can we tell that the man with the dog is not a red handed anarchist plotting against the life of the lord mayor ? If so, my notes will convict him."

" I think he works in a livery stable down the street, and I have seen him and his dog a hundred times."

" But the man with the goggles ? Suppose he is a seditionist."

" Oh, the man with the goggles lived in the next street, and he got pepper in his eyes two weeks ago. Our own doctor attended him. I can't exactly understand how you saw him wink at another man. Did one of the goggles wink ? "

" None of your business ! If you like being an idiot, be one by all means. I know the value of these notes and shall keep them up. For instance, when I came home this evening——"

" Well ? " queried Mrs. Bowser as he waited.

" A suspicious looking person was hanging over Brown's gate. He was short and squat. He was run down at the heels. Suppose Brown is murdered in his bed to-night and the house robbed. My notes will furnish a clue to the police, and within twenty-four hours the murderer is arrested."

Mrs. Bowser was convinced that the suspicious person was a man who had been beating carpets for the Browns all the afternoon, but she didn't say so, and Mr. Bowser continued ;

" Since we have been sitting here this evening I have heard and made notes of two fire alarms, one ambulance call, a cry of seeming distress and the howl of a dog. They may not prove of value, and yet they may bring a criminal to justice."

" And you won't attend to your toe this evening ? " she asked as he walked about.

Mr. Bowser halted to bestow a look of contempt upon her and then started downstairs to bring up some wine from the cellar. He was thinking of future history as he descended and presently missed a step and turned head over heels, with a yell, and collided with the cellar bottom. Mrs. Bowser hurried down to find him sitting up in a daze, and after she had felt the bump on his head and ascertained that neither arm nor leg was broken she said :

" Friday Evening.—Have seen nothing of the man with the goggles or the man with the dog, but in descending my cellar stairs I engaged in a circus performance for the benefit of the future historian. Was assisted upstairs by my wife, the cook and the cat. No change in the system of government on my account. Come, Mr. Bowser."

He got up slowly and painfully and with many a sigh, and, leaning against the wall, he pointed his finger at her and tried to express his feelings in fitting language, but all he could get out was :

" Wo-woman, by th-thunder——"

M. Quad.

" A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility."—*Herrick.*

" So you've made a choice at last ! " I said, or rather exclaimed, as my cousin Mary with beaming face finished a breathless statement, from which I had gathered, notwithstanding its involved and hesitating circumlocution, that she had become engaged to Harry Carlyon.

" I have," said Mary with decision.

" Well, it was time. I have always—you must forgive me, Mary, for saying so—thought you very heartless in your dealings with those two young men, Carlyon and Walsham " (Walsham was a second suitor and a rival to Carlyon). " You have kept those two good fellows dancing attendance on you these three years past, and have gone on playing off one against the other, never letting either know that you cared for the one more than for the other. Don't be angry when I tell you that everybody has regarded it as somewhat heartless and cruel."

" Playing off ! " Mary exclaimed, with a note of anger in her silvery voice. " I never did anything of the sort. They were both so good that I couldn't make up my mind to favour one at the expense of the other. My failure was too much kindness and an intense reluctance to be cruel. But people always are unjust."

" Always—when their judgment is not to our mind, Mary. And now that you have chosen, I don't think that your best friends will approve your choice."

" Approve ? Indeed ! Much I care whether they approve or not. But why, pray, should they not approve ? "

" I wonder you ask, the reason is so obvious. Carlyon's

not so young, not so rich, nor so handsome as Walsham; nor is he quite so agreeable and pleasant in conversation. Otherwise, I must confess they're about on a level."

"What do all those things matter if I like him better?"

"Very little, I suppose. In youth and beauty, and wealth and vivacity, my dear cousin, you have quite enough of your own, to make up for anything that may be wanting in Harry Carlyon. But it does seem odd that, after taking three years in coming to a decision, you should choose the one whom Society and your own set vote the less eligible of the two. It not only *seems* odd but it *is* odd, Mary; and I know for certain that Walsham was really very fond of you."

"I have pleased myself," said Mary decisively, by way of disposing of all further argument. "What would be the use to me of Society's opinion and people's 'say' if I made a wrong choice? I don't care a snap for what people say, or for Society's approval. I have given my hand to the man I like best, who likes me best, and who is best. And that's final," she concluded, with emphasis tossing her pretty head and stamping her equally pretty foot.

I ought to have said that my cousin Mary has the prettiest foot I have ever seen in my life. She's proud of it, and of the other one also, though she hasn't the least pride in her graceful figure, her handsome face, or her great masses of glorious chestnut hair.

But though she was anxious for finality. I could not let her run off so easily and satisfiedly with her hasty and unreasonable decision. It was so dogmatic and so eccentric that it roused in me the spirit of opposition and contention. I admired Walsham and liked Carlyon; Walsham would be best as a *beau*, Carlyon as a husband—I mean as the husband of a really serious woman. No one who knows Mary would dream of classing her as serious, while most people attribute that mood to me, and in such excess as to count it a failing.

It seemed to me so very absurd, not to say quite wrong, for Mary with her winning prettiness and pleasant mercurial ways to put aside a man like Walsham, whose nature has such a close affinity with her own, and pitch upon Carlyon, who is serious and reserved, that I felt strongly prompted to impress upon her the knowledge that her choice was impulsive and whimsical rather than reasonable and wise. Not that it affected me at all, except through my regard for her, and the earnest desire I always have had to see her happiness assured.

For three whole years these two friends had been honouring her with their attentions, and she had been quite unable to make up her mind as to which she would prefer. She had told me so scores of times when I had spoken to her about the unfairness of this indecision, and even warned her by quoting that wise old parable about the two stools. And now quite suddenly she appeared to have discovered that the one was immensely superior to the other, while that one was just the fellow whom I and her closest friends had voted was the least suitable, and were confident she would not select. It was quite erratic and unreasonable, not to say eccentric, on her part to act so. Therefore I felt obliged to say, in reply to her last remark:

"Well, you've made your choice, and I hope it will lead to the utmost happiness. But while I congratulate you, Mary, I wish to say that you really must not wonder if people think you unreasonable, and say that you have acted on a whim. Everybody made sure—I know Walsham's sisters did—that your choice would fall on him. You'll recollect that less than a fortnight ago you affirmed most seriously to me that you could not determine which of these two you liked best, while now you speak as if you had been in love with Carlyon all the time, and had never cared a straw for Walsham. In short, to use a sporting phrase, Carlyon's first and Walsham's nowhere. It really is—you must excuse me, Mary—most odd and whimsical. I should have thought Carlyon's serious ways would jar on you."

"Not at all; I like a man who is serious. It seems more manly. Walsham talks too much. And because he has the gift of talk he seems as if he were anxious to parade it, and, I half suspect, believe people ought to feel obliged to him for his readiness to entertain them. I quite admit that I was, until recently, unable to decide, though I have no doubt now that my heart was pledged on the side of Harry almost from the first. But it sometimes happens, I think—at least I am sure if I had more experience, I would think so—that a girl does not discover her love for a man unless he helps her to. Anyway, that's how I feel now. As to being whimsical, if you knew how it all came about you'd certainly think you were justified in saying that I am."

All this Mary said with a laughing inconsequential air, as though an engagement were on a level with the purchase of a new hat; but, of course, she may have thought more deeply. She was so innocently irresponsible, so childishly frank, and, withal, so ludicrously incoherent and self-contradictory, that I was forced from my seriousness into laughter. But my curiosity was the strongest emotion which her last remark excited, and I eagerly urged:

"Oh, do tell me how it all came about—all, every detail. I'll never breathe a word to anyone," I added seductively.

"Then you shall know," said Mary resolutely. "It was all decided as we walked back from the hockey match. Carlyon was on one side and Walsham was on the other. The latter was full of his droll stories, and he exercised all his wit to make us merry. And you know when it comes to a question of competition in entertaining talk, Carlyon is easily put in the shade. So it happened that he had not a word to say, while Walsham was just bubbling over with fun. I knew from a side-glance that Harry felt his deficiency. That evoked my sympathy, and my sympathy suggested that Walsham was pushing his advantage too strenuously.

"I was very uncomfortable, too, because my boot-lace had loosened, and was adding to the mud which I had gathered on the hockey ground. But, of course, I could not stop in the road to tie it. However, we had not gone far when Harry, the dear boy, who hardly ever took his eyes off my face, caught one of my downward glances and then saw that the lace-knot was untied. He immediately stopped and said: 'Your boot-lace is untied, Miss Warren; pray let me tie it up for you.' I felt my face glow, but, of course, I could not very well refuse an offer made so courteously; therefore assented. Harry at once bent his knee, and, notwithstanding my protests, planted my foot, dirty as it was, upon it, while he tied up the lace ever so neatly. I cannot tell you how much more comfortable it made me, and the walk to Melton Towers was very pleasant afterwards. When we reached it I asked him to come next evening and help us to entertain at the children's party. I did not ask Mr. Walsham. It was at the children's party that Harry proposed."

"So the tieing of the boot-lace decided all your future!"

"Ah, you don't understand," said Mary; "I was so uncomfortable before, and he tied it so nicely, and it made such a difference walking afterwards! Besides, you'll own that it was very thoughtful and affectionate of him?"

Of course I owned.

Owen Blayney.

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Who's the Dupe?

The Story of a Visit to Homburg.

I.

A Disturbing Element!

"You needn't say another word, Fred. You are not married to me yet; you haven't even the right to object to me going anywhere, although your father and mother wish me to marry you—and if I want to go to Homburg, I shall go, and you and Mr. and Mrs. Fleming can follow or not, just as you feel inclined. But I shall go, and there is nothing more to be said about it!"

The words were uttered in a torrent of wrath, and at their conclusion the young, pretty, impetuous and well-dressed girl bounced from the dainty room in which she and Fred Fleming had been conversing, and the door banged to after her with a thud that made him jump.

The young man gazed at the closed portal gloomily. There were breakers ahead, and he did not know how to coax the wilful girl, whom, until this moment of his awakening, he had been inclined to look upon as his own exclusive property. He scratched his head, pulled his well-grown moustache, looked utterly foolish beneath his mantling colour, and rose with a sigh. Crossing to the mirror, he looked at his not unhandsome features with some show of curiosity. Then he gazed into the fire, kicked the fender reflectively, and sighed again.

"I'm hanged if I can understand it," he murmured at last. "Ever since Clara came of age, and has had her own way in everything, she has been a different girl. She used to be so kind and nice, and, hang it, she was fond of me. I suppose I shall have to drag mother and father after her with me to Homburg. It's a beastly nuisance, when we might be so easily married here, and remain at home as happy as two kittens. However, she means to have her own way, and there is an end of the matter. I'll tell her we'll all go—though I'm sure evil will come of it."

And with something very like bad language he sat down, waiting for Clara to come downstairs again.

He intimated his decision to his *fiancée* (for Clara Masters was really such) before he left the house, and, hailing a cab, drove sadly back to his chambers, where he set to work composing the letter to his parents which was to arrange the journey and date of starting.

Clara Masters assumed an attitude of complete indifference as to whether he accompanied her or not, and sought the companionship of her maid Elsie, from whom all her new ideas had been gathered.

"He says he will come with me to Homburg, Elsie," said she, with a pout, when she had gained the privacy of her dressing-room, to her maid who was preparing her things for the theatre that night.

The maid smiled significantly.

"Of course, Miss Clara," said she, "I knew he would. No man would let a pretty girl like you—to say nothing of a fortune of fifteen thousand a year—slip through his fingers without making an effort to save the situation."

"You think it is really my money he cares for, Elsie, and not poor me," asked the girl, while she clasped and unclasped her hands nervously, remembering every phase of Fred's really cold behaviour during their brief interview of the afternoon.

"Not a doubt about it," replied the maid sententiously, smoothing out a beautiful silken skirt.

"Oh, you make me think so," said Clara, almost crying. "And yet in the old days, when he used to come and see me at my guardian, Mr. Mansfield's house, I am sure he really loved me. There is a change in his manner now I know; but yet I think it is I who have changed, Elsie, and not he."

"Nonsense," cried the maid, taking out a jewel case, opening it, and showing the clusters of glittering diamonds which lay on their bed of turquoise plush within. "Of course he was fond of you in the old days, and so were his father and mother, who were on the look-out for a wealthy wife for their only son. Didn't he know even then that you were coming into all this money which your father left you? You were just as good a catch then as now. You come with me to Homburg, my dear. I am older than you, and know the world. You'll have chances there which you would never have in England!"

Clara sat down dejectedly.

"That's the one thing I dread, Elsie," she cried. "That a man should marry me only for the sake of my money. I want a husband who can give me his heart as well as his hand. And when you say that about Fred it makes me wish never to see him again!"

She was upon the point of crying. The maid went to her.

"Don't worry about him," she said. "Wait till you get to Homburg. There are millionaires there as handsome as paint, who would be only too glad to marry you for your beauty, and who would lavish their fortune upon you, giving you everything your heart can desire. Do you think if I were a girl like you I'd waste myself upon a young man who only thinks of your money? Why, when I was in Homburg last—let me see, it is ten or more years ago—there was a young Italian nobleman staying there, of good family and just turned twenty. He was such a handsome man, and heir to a great fortune. Count Frascini was his name, and he had quite a passion for English women, though he was a good young man, and didn't drink and gamble like the rest. If you met him, my dear, you would know what love means; and he's not the only one by many a score. Go to the Stein Hotel in Louisen Strasse, give out that you are comparatively poor, see the magnificent gentlemen that throng the place, and make your choice, when you have found some young man like Count Frascini, who will love you for yourself, and marry you, though he thinks you haven't a penny; and you will live happily ever afterwards, as the children's story books say. Such mercenary young men as Master Frederick Fleming should be taught their lesson, and you must teach it him, my dear."

For two months, ever since she had taken Elsie for her maid, Clara had listened to such talk as this, and being a young, inexperienced girl, just of age, and left to her own resources by the death of her guardian, and blessed with a large fortune which she thought the objective of every young man who addressed her, it was small wonder that the more mature woman should have influenced her to such an extent that Fred now looked at her in sheer amazement.

That night at the theatre was a miserable one for Clara. She was discontented with the world, with herself, with Fred for not browbeating her more, with her maid, and, finally, with the play, which she declared was "silly"; and at last when they arrived home she retired to her room to sleep, worn out both in mind and body. Ill at ease, she tried to foretell the result of her forthcoming visit to Homburg, which in her heart she wished she had never arranged.

She loved Fred, she confessed, as she lay there unable to sleep, but since he cared only for her money and not herself, she felt cold and reserved towards him; and seeing in his desire to accompany her to Homburg a wish on his part not to lose sight of her or her money, she realised she was being swept farther apart from him than ever.

However, so far as the journey to Homburg was concerned, she had already booked a passage for herself and her maid, and she would not draw back; and so at the end of the week she and Elsie, and Fred and Mr. and Mrs. Fleming left London together.

It was an awkward journey that, conducted for the most part in silence, relieved only by moments of forced and strained conversation; with Fred glaring daggers of wrath at the maid Elsie, Mr. and Mrs. Fleming at a loss what to say or do, and Clara engrossed in a yellow-backed two-and-sixpenny novel, entitled "The Millionaire Adventurer"!

The ultimate arrival at the Stein Hotel, in Louisen Strasse, at Homburg, brought about only a partial breaking up of the clouded atmosphere, and dinner was partaken of by the jaded party with such dull attention that one would have thought they were presiding at the consumption of baked meats at a funeral.

The maid Elsie, who sat at the outside edge of the table, seemed the gayest of the lot of them. Perhaps she was thinking of her former visit to Homburg, which in a moment of confidence she had confessed to Miss Clara had been with a young and fascinating widow, who captivated all hearts, and ultimately eloped with the leader of the band in the kiosk in the Park, who left behind him a weeping wife and a family of eight!

The maid's restless eyes wandered to right and left during dinner. She was trying to pick out somebody she had met there before, thought Clara, and after all, was it not natural?

Presently a tall, good-looking man entered. He was dressed in immaculate evening clothes, and he sat down at a table opposite, where Clara did not fail to notice him. The maid's eyes lit up with an expression of delight at the sight of him. She kicked out at Clara under the table and winked. Fred Fleming did not see the wink, but he felt the kick and emitted a yell.

"I wish you'd be careful, my good woman," he said, with a vicious glance at Elsie. "You've hurt my shin!"

"I wished to attract Madam's attention," said the maid, hanging her head to hide a blush.

As for Clara she was utterly mystified, but she regarded the handsome stranger with more attention. When at last the party rose and prepared to leave the room, she received her enlightenment.

Her maid Elsie clutched her by the arm.

"Good gracious!" she gasped. "Miss Clara, Miss Clara, who would have thought it? It's 'im! it's 'im!"

"I wish you wouldn't be so silly, and make such an exhibition of yourself, Elsie!" remonstrated her mistress irritably. "And perhaps you will have the goodness to explain who 'im' is?"

"Why, it's 'im—Count Algo Frascini!" murmured the maid, ready to faint. "And still unmarried by the look of 'im. This is fatality!"

"You may call it fatality, or what you like," cried Miss Clara, with a toss of her head as she swept out of the room. "I should term it nonsense!"

But all the same she turned and directed a last glance at the handsome stranger of whom she had heard so much, and she saw he was watching her with a fascinating smile upon his face. Her heart beat wildly.

II.

"The Little Drama at the Stein Hotel!"

To anyone but an unsuspecting and easily led girl the coincidence of the Count's appearance at the Stein Hotel at such a time would have appeared, to say the least of it, suspicious; but Clara did not think; like most women, she was utterly devoid of logic.

And so in three days the introduction to this distinguished foreigner was accomplished; at the end of the week he was on good terms with her; at the end of a fortnight he was more her lover than poor Fred Fleming, and that young man was reduced to the utmost depths of despair.

He postured with a foil in his hands before a large cheval mirror in his dressing-room, vowing he would kill his enemy; he spent his evenings with Ma and Pa at the theatre, where he had the pleasure of playing gooseberry to Clara and the odious Count (whom nothing could repress); he took the water

She turned and directed a last glance at the handsome stranger of whom she had heard so much.

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which nearly killed him; he lost mad sums gambling wildly at the tables, and took to drinking brandy in large quantities, which did not raise him in the estimation of the girl he loved.

At last, unable to endure it any longer, he ventured to remonstrate with Clara, with the result that, under the advice of her maid Elsie, she broke off the engagement, and in a rage he went upstairs and packed his trunks. But he did not leave Homburg. The thought of leaving Clara there at the mercy of any adventurer who might choose to come along sobered him and bade him stay; and so the whole party remained at the Stein in absolute estrangement, and the playing of the comedy went on.

The curtain on the first act showed the triumph of Count Frascini, who, like most foreigners, could not take his honours easily, but posed and put on side enough for the whole of Italy.

And so things went on until one night when Fred retired, without locking his bedroom door. He was upon the point of undressing when there came the sound of a stealthy tread in the corridor without, and the next moment, to his utter astonishment, the door was opened and a woman entered.

She paid absolutely no heed to his cry of warning, and, after carefully closing the door, crossed the room and sat herself down in the armchair by the side of the dressing-table.

"My dear, good woman!" said Fred, aghast, recognising her as the lady who had arrived two days before with enough luggage to fill the hold of a vessel, and with whose prim appearance he had been much taken up at the time. "What on earth are you doing here? I really must warn you that unless you leave my room immediately I shall be under the painful necessity of ringing for the servants!"

But the lady paralysed him by placing her finger to her lips, winking her eye, and taking off her hair, which exposed underneath the well-oiled hirsute adornment of a man.

"Freddy, my boy," said the erstwhile lady with a smile. "Forgive my unladylike entrance. But I couldn't help it, and I hadn't a chance of speaking to you before with the guests and the waiters constantly watching us. I had to have a talk with you, and so I risked a lot by coming here to-night; and now I want to ask you a few questions."

"Good gracious, it's Charteris!"

And Freddy fell back upon the bed aghast as he recognised this man as the well-known detective of that name whom he had the pleasure of meeting at Wiesbaden a year before, when they had managed to become the best of friends.

"You're right, it is Charteris!" exclaimed the detective, whose work was confined exclusively to the Continental cities. "Glad to meet you again, Mr. Fleming!"

"But what on earth does this mean?" asked Fred, running his nervous fingers through his hair.

"Tell you all about that later. Got to ask you a few questions at once for I mustn't linger here. First of all, is the young lady named Miss Clara Masters your *fiancée*?"

"She was until a week ago," groaned Freddy.

"Ah, until she was fascinated by Count Frascini. I think I understand. Now, tell me—how long has her maid been with her?"

"For six months or more—and she's the devil!"

"Hum, she'll not grow wings!"

"But why do you ask?"

"That's my business. But you may rely upon one thing—I'm your friend. Now, not a word to anyone that you know me—and don't address me in company. Tell me—Miss Masters has money, has she not?"

"Yes!"

"And her solicitors, the trustees of her father's estate, are Messrs. Gordon and Gordon, of Wauchope Street, City, I believe?"

"Yes!" gasped the stupefied young man, astounded at the extent of the detective's information.

"Good; that's all I wanted to know. And now if news arrives that the young lady has lost all her money, don't be surprised. Invested money has a way of losing itself sometimes; and I have reason to believe that Messrs. Gordon and Gordon's investments have *failed*. And now, good night. I'll go this way, if you don't mind. My room's next to yours. I had it arranged that way. Caution is the greatest thing in these cases. Ta-ta—see you in the morning, but mind, not a word—nor a sign—that you know me."

And without another word the man in the skirts vanished into what Fred Fleming firmly believed to be only a cupboard, but which was in reality an entrance leading into the next bedchamber. The young man saw the door close while he sat with his mouth wide open in amazement.

He sat for hours dreaming and thinking, and the next morning when he went down to breakfast there was the woman Charteris—or the *man* Charteris, to be correct—seated at a side table, lost in the columns of a lady's journal and sipping coffee!

The Count was seated at a table with Clara and her maid. He paid the pretty girl devoted attention and glared ferociously at Fred. He seemed in greater favour than ever. But while the meal was proceeding a page boy entered with a telegram which he handed to Miss Masters, and stood by while she read it, respectfully waiting for her answer.

The contents caused the girl to turn pale, after a moment she crushed the piece of paper between her dainty fingers.

Count Frascini watched these proceedings with an interested eye, and Fred noticed that Charteris lifted his eyes to the rim of the paper she—no, he—held, and glanced across to the neighbouring table.

"Ze contents pain you, Signorita?" said the Italian, with what he meant to be a loving smile. "Will you please per-mit me to read the telegram?"

She paused for a moment. During the last few days she had almost given him a right to inquire into everything which concerned her. Her maid Elsie had done her best for him, and as she thought of the generous nature of this man who had been upheld to her as being a paragon of all the virtues, she decided to let him know what the message said, and passed him the sheet of paper.

Fred saw Charteris positively wink at him.

The Count first of all saw that the message was signed Gordon and Gordon, and its contents positively startled him.

"My dear young lady," the words began, "it is with the greatest sorrow I inform you that the investment of the money left you by your lamented and respected father in African Gubat Mines, and in North-Eastern Four per Cents., has turned out disastrously, and that the entire fortune so disposed has been irrevocably lost. I shall be glad to see you upon the earliest possible opportunity!"

The Count's face was white with sympathy when he had read the last word, and he tugged at his waxed moustache in his excitement.

"Scan-der-lous!" he gasped. "They should be prosecuted! Signorita, per-mit-a me!"

And without waiting for Clara's sanction he passed the paper to Fred, who, reading it, thought Charteris must be a wizard.

They were an unhappy party at the Stein for the rest of the day.

Count Frascini wandered about with his arms crossed and gazed vacantly out into the street, where the rain fell in torrents as befitted such a mournful occasion. Clara had gone to her room, and the nobleman, speaking her name in a soft voice, sent countless messages of condolence to her by her maid, with whom he talked long and earnestly, doubtless discussing the pretty English girl, her change of fortune, and how good he was going to be to her after they were married.

Fred was unbearable. First of all rude to the waiters, then insulting to the proprietor, who followed him about in an attitude of abject apology, he sat himself in a large armchair in the smoking-room, and drank brandy and soda in sheer desperation. Where had his chance gone to now?

The Count with his great fortune and his family name could metaphorically "wipe the floor with him," and he a Britisher too!

And all the time there was the meddlesome old lady—known to Fred as the detective Charteris—hovering about in the vicinity of the public rooms, turning over paper after paper in a vain search for something he apparently could not find. Count Frascini was never very far away from him Fred noticed.

Mr. and Mrs. Fleming giving up their son in despair, went off to the Zoological Gardens and got wet, and later in the

afternoon, Fred, making up his quarrel with the proprietor, invited him to a game of billiards, when, playing with more force than judgment, he lost heavily.

There was tragedy in the air, and for the first time since she had entered Clara's service, the maid Elsie seemed downcast.

Even she at last sought her room with a raging toothache.

At seven in the evening, Count Frascini packed his bags, suddenly remembering an important engagement in Vienna. He notified his intending departure to the proprietor, telling him he would be back in a few days, and arranged for the delivery of a perfumed note to Miss Clara, whom he could not see owing to her indisposition.

At dinner the maid Elsie was late, wasting some time in her mistress' bedroom, where she remained to put things straight; and Count Frascini was not present at all, much to the relief of Freddy and the sorrow of the dejected girl; who this time sat three tables away from her lover to whom she would not speak a word.

At ten o'clock the maid Elsie could not be found, nor could anyone remember having seen her since dinner; and Freddy noticed too, that the woman—or rather the man Charteris—was also absent.

At half-past ten a well-dressed man in a frock coat and a shiny silk hat, all fuss and fashion, entered the lounge and approached Clara, who was sitting in a glum silence with her back to Freddy. He took off his headgear as he came, and drew something from his pocket, which he held towards her.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Masters," he said apologetically, "but this is your jewel-case, I believe?"

"Yes!" she gasped, with staring eyes, as she snatched it from him. "How dare you take it, sir?"

"Your pardon, madam—I did not take it!" he replied, with a fixed expression. "Maid Elsie—alias Madame Fromage—alias Betty Gough—alias Julia Smith—alias the Countess Frascini—really Eliza Smith—*did*. Notorious Continental thief and swindler—wanted to lay my hands on her for a long time. I restore case, madam! Will you see if contents are correct? My name's Charteris!"

Clara stared at him as though she thought he was mad.

"Fact, I assure you, madam," said Charteris, with a charming smile. "I arrested them both at the station just as they were about to enter the express to Vienna. Had warrant prepared anticipating events just as they turned out. Got accomplice nicely. Notorious scoundrel, Count Frascini—real name Bob Smith of Bermondsey—ex-actor—clever rogue—stage not well paid enough for him; duped him splendidly with that telegram from Gordon and Gordon!"

And he chuckled inwardly at his own cleverness.

"Really," said Clara, with withering scorn as she rose to her feet and cast a glance of hatred at Fred, who was dancing something in the nature of a Highland fling in a corner with the corpulent and unlucky proprietor, "there is nothing to laugh at, sir! I fail to see that there is a joke in the matter."

"When shall the wedding be, dearest?"

"Oh, but there *is!*" said Charteris, sobering down. "Sad life this—must laugh dull care away sometimes—though it's unprofessional. Your fortune's all right, my dear lady—Gordon and Gordon helped *me* to save *you*—that's all! Frascini took the thing seriously! Ha! ha! ha! ha! He told maid to steal your jewels seeing no hope of getting anything else. And I took *her* red-handed! Sad life this. Shall want you to appear as evidence against them, madam, so please don't leave Homburg too soon. And now, having returned you your property and assured you that your fortune is quite safe, I must get to the lock-up and see that Frascini and company are stowed away in comfort."

"Sir," cried the blushing girl, "I think your conduct is—is—is—unmanly!"

"Quite right," he muttered, as he watched her sweep from the room with a stamp of defiance directed at Fred. "It's womanly sometimes—even effeminate!" And he chuckled as he thought of his disguise.

A moment later he was caught in Fred's arms and whirled round.

"Charteris," yelled the latter, "you're a brick—a regular—amazon! How can I ever thank you?"

"Don't waste time on me," he answered, "comfort her! When a woman realises what a fool she's been, she wants it. Glad to have been of service to you—and great coup for me. Go and kiss, and make it up again. See you to-morrow. Good-night!"

And without more ado he glided from the room.

The guests had, for the most part, retired. Only Mr. and Mrs. Fleming remained in the room. Freddy ordered a cigar, and crossed to them.

"Dad," he said, "you got wet through seeing the monkeys this morning—take mother to bed!"

"But, my lad—it's time you turned in too."

"No, dad, it's near the hour when the ghosts appear. I want to wait for mine here!"

A few minutes later he was alone. He sat by the fire smoking and thinking, and there was a smile on his face, he was almost happy.

"Fred! Fred!"

His ghost had come—the ghost of a past.

"God bless you, child! I thought you might come to me. But dry your eyes—you mustn't cry, Clara!"

"Oh, I'm not crying because of them!" she sobbed. "I am weeping to think how blind—how selfish—how foolish I've been—and how g-g-g-oo-d you've always been to me!"

He rose and kissed her, and, doing so, saw the proprietor watching them; he signed to him to withdraw, and the old man went out rubbing his hands at the thought of another honeymoon couple in the spring.

"When shall the wedding be, dearest?" asked Freddy, wishing to make sure of her this time.

"I said—I wouldn't marry—you—while I—until I had lost my fortune—Freddy, dear!"

"But, child, you did lose it—to-day!"

"So—so—I did, Fred!" she gasped, her eyes opening as she saw the way out of her difficulty. "But only for a few hours!"

"Freddy," she whispered a minute later, "I want you to forgive me, and I want you to forgive that—that man Frascini too; for he's shown me really how very—very much I care for you!"

For answer he gave her a kiss, and led her from the room with his arm round her waist as there was no one by to see.

The stout proprietor crept out of the shadow and watched them as they ascended the broad staircase together. He smiled, for that wedding and honeymoon trip in the spring had become a certainty!

"Ah!" said he, to himself, "I must tackle Mistare Fleming on that subject—to-morrow!"

A. Steffens-Hardy.

Have You Met Her?

"Did you read this, dear?" said Mrs. Grigsby to Orlando the other night. "It's a strange case. A harmless lunatic imagines that he's a grain of corn, and will not go into the yard lest a chicken eat him. Isn't it an odd delusion?" "Oh, the world is full of such delusions, dear," replied Grigsby. "I know a harmless lunatic who seems to imagine she's a piece of cheese, and she will fly from a room when a mouse enters it, for fear the little creature will devour her."

Dangerous Ground.

He: "Jolly conservatory, Miss Matchems, isn't it?" She: "Yes; quite renowned for the number of proposals that have been made here." He: "H'm—yes. By-the-bye, they're beginning the waltz." She: "It was here that Charlie Gudgeon proposed to Miss Pyke. They were sitting here, just as we are now, and he said, quite abruptly, just as you might say to me, 'Will you be mine?' and she said, as I might say to you——" He: "Ah, yes—quite so; but hadn't we better have a spin round?"

IF YOU'VE FAILED

in business, it's perhaps because you have taken up the wrong work. You should ascertain from an unbiassed person the real bent of your mind, and to do this you should send a specimen of your handwriting to ***RANÉE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.,*** inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

NAME HUNTING COMPETITION.

British and Irish Rivers.

FIRST PRIZE - £10. SECOND PRIZE - £2.
THIRD to SIXTH PRIZES - £1 each.

Below will be found fifteen sets of words, each set describing the name of a river in the United Kingdom.

Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover.

NOTE THESE FACTS. . .

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and pin it to the other three lists, then post all in an envelope marked "Rivers," to the Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C., to arrive by first post on Wednesday, May 21st.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

LAST LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:
To flow gently..... Ouse.

46. A game at marbles	46	.....
47. To press hard	47	.....
48. Current of air, press forward with impetuosity	48	.....
49. A drawer for cash	49	.....
50. To convey on a cart	50	.....
51. The brand-goose	51	.....
52. To scatter over	52	.....
53. A freshwater fish of the carp tribe	53	.....
54. To come from	54	.....
55. Hide the ocean	55	.....
56. A thick shrub	56	.....
57. An indefinite quantity	57	.....
58. Of no use	58	.....
59. The name of a colouring substance	59	.....
60. Piece of rock crystal for adorning branch candlesticks	60	.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

The Editor hopes that Competitors will avail themselves of this opportunity of inclosing a few stamps for the Fresh Air Fund.

A Marriage of the World.

By which Two Hearts were Broken.

The steady dip of the oars ceased; the boat drifted slowly among the sweet-scented lilies and tall rushes. The man sat with crossed arms and looked moodily across the little sunlit lake, not seeming to watch the girl opposite, who stooped and picked a lily bud, holding it caressingly an instant, then, her mood changing, throwing it petulantly into the water.

"You knew I was engaged all the time, Wilbur," she broke the silence.

"And I knew—I know you love me," the man rejoined, bringing his eyes slowly back to the girl's face.

"But it was unfair—cowardly of you to make me say so," she said, looking into the water again.

"I don't see why," he said. "I knew, without your telling. It did no harm."

"It did no good, either," she answered, meeting his glance, full of sneering bitterness, with her great dark eyes. "I should have been more careful; I should not have received attentions from you; but——"

"Well?"

"Well, Mr. Harrison is so—so very busy, and he trusted me so perfectly, you know," with a little catch in her voice.

"I understand; and he is wealthy and has a high position, and of course——"

"Don't, Wilbur! You hurt me!" the girl interrupted, hastily. "It isn't really so much that he is rich and popular as that—we have always been meant for each other, and of course he has never had a thought of another woman, and he has been so truly devoted to me all these years; and to break the engagement would make such a—no, I can't think of it!" she added, after a moment's pause. "My family would never forgive me; and besides, I owe it to Mr. Harrison to keep my word."

"I shall not urge you further, Miss Preston. It would be too presumptuous to insist upon your giving up being the wife of the Reverend Mr. Harrison for a penniless duffer who has nothing to urge but that he loves you and you love him."

The girl's lips trembled pitifully. "Row back now, Wilbur," she whispered, and without another word he lifted the oars and sent the little boat gliding out into the water.

The summer visitors were neither fashionable nor many in this locality, and these two had depended upon each other for amusement; had rowed together on the little lake, taken rambles through daisy-strewn fields, watched the moon rise from the wide old balcony, and played duets in the music room on rainy days, and—fallen desperately in love with each other. The awakening had come with the passionate declaration of love.

The beautiful daughter of the world has counted the cost, balanced her heart against her reason, during the whole of the short summer night, and has concluded that they must part; so they say good-bye at the hotel entrance (he is to leave in a few hours). It is better so, the girl thinks wearily. There are people strolling about on the balcony; so they clasp hands, look once into each other's eyes, and part.

* * * *

Rev. Edward Harrison is supposed to be dictating his Sunday sermon—one of those eloquent sermons which have made him famous. He is a fine man, so his many admirers will tell you; handsome, wealthy, and a great student, labouring for the good of his fellow-men. He is working himself to death, the sympathetic ladies of his parish contend, and sorely needs the holiday which his church insists upon his taking after his marriage to Miss Preston. He has stayed at his post all through the heat of the summer, refusing to leave when urged to take a few days' rest at the seaside or in the country. Such unselfishness! But no—such selfishness; for there is more of an attraction here; something which charms him more than the tossing waste of waters or the flowering splendour of the country. It is a slender girl with great blue eyes, soft curling hair, and the most bewitching manner in the world. The dignified divine watches her entranced, as she flits about his study.

She is one of those tiny, bird-like creatures whose every motion is full of grace. He forgets his text in watching her snowy, dimpled hand flying across the paper—for she is only his secretary, a poor girl in whom one of the ladies of the church became interested.

He considered himself sufficiently in love with his *fiancée*—the match is so entirely satisfactory to society and so suitable in all respects, and then, Miss Preston is so much in love with him, poor girl! It would break her heart if he should prove unfaithful—it would never do. He paced back and forth, with his large, white hands clasped behind him. Why, why had this tiny, bright-haired girl come into his calm, unworldly life—and coming, crept into his heart and refused to be banished by all the sophistries he could command.

He turned sharply as he passed her and laid his hand upon her head. She looked up, her face dimpling with smiles.

"I ought to tell you that—that I am engaged," he began, his voice slightly husky.

The girl's face grew deadly white.

"Yes, I have been a cowardly villain to make love to you, Dora—I— I wonder that you have not heard that I am to be married very soon."

"I heard you were," she answered (but did not add that she did not believe it).

"Ah, I am glad. My *fiancée*, Miss Preston, will return soon—she will be here on Saturday, I think. Oh, Dora, help me!" he said, sitting down weakly.

"Would you rather I would go away?" she asked.

"I'm afraid it would be best," he answered, looking at her miserably.

"I will go—to-morrow—and probably will not be back until after the wedding," she said, her attempt to speak lightly failing sadly.

* * * * *

A fortnight later the Rev. Mr. Harrison and the beautiful Miss Preston were married, and were overwhelmed with the congratulations of their many friends.

Gertrude Keene.

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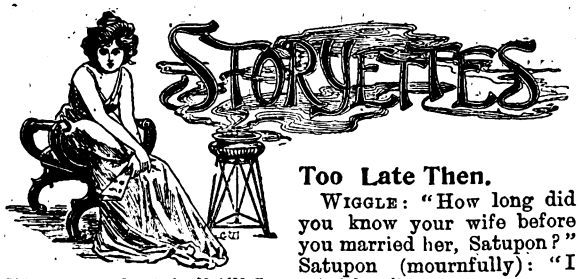

Too Late Then.

Wiggle: "How long did you know your wife before you married her, Satupon?" Satupon (mournfully): "I didn't know her at all till I married her."

From the Lips of Experience.

"I feel now quite satisfied that there is no life so happy as a married one." "And how long have you been married?" "Since last Wednesday."

He Could Show Her.

"Johnny," said the pretty teacher, "what is a kiss?" "I can't exactly put it in words," returned the boy; "but if yer really wanter know, I can show yer."

Two Lights.

"You are the light of my life," she said to him as she bid him good-night at the front door. "Put out that light," growled her father at the head of the stairs. And the front door slammed.

A Sweet Girl Graduate.

He (at dinner): "May I assist you to the cheese, Miss Girton?" She (just graduated): "Thanks, no. I am very comfortable where I am. But you may assist the cheese to me, if you will."

Expectant.

"I hope you appreciate the fact, sir, that in marrying my daughter, you marry a large-hearted, generous girl?" "I do, sir (with emotion), and I hope she inherits these qualities from her father."

Simple and Effective.

Daughter: "Yes, I know, Mr. Staylate comes very often, but it isn't my fault. I do everything I can do to drive him away." Old Gentleman: "Fudge! I haven't heard you sing to him once."

Quite Inadequate.

"What did Miss X. say when you asked her for her hand?" "She merely asked me how I made a living." "And you said——?" "With my brains." "And what did she say?" "I hadn't capital enough for two."

A Patient Maiden.

"Another letter from Alfred? When do you expect to marry him?" "He has two more years at Harrow. After that he will go to Oxford; when he has finished there he will set out to make his fortune. When he has made his fortune we shall be married. Oh, it all seems so beautiful."

A Soft Answer.

"Jane, I saw that policeman speak to you. That's the third policeman I've seen speaking to you this morning. I can't allow that." "No, ma'am. But the policemen always do admire baby so; they can't 'elp stopping and askin' about 'im. They all say as they never see such a fine child."

A Shrewd Husband.

Husband: "I am not ready to go out walking yet." Wife: "But I am, and we must go immediately." Husband: "But, my dear, your hat is not on straight." Wife: "Dear me, isn't it? Wait a minute till I go to my room and put it right." Exit wife, for half an hour, and her shrewd husband completes his work.

Easily Done.

A rich miser has a niece whom he proclaims to be his heiress, but who has never seen any of his money. "Your niece is twenty years old," said a friend; "you ought to do something towards getting her settled." "Oh, well," replied the miser, "I will pretend to be ill."

From Her Point of View.

"Do you understand the importance of the step you are about to take?" inquired a Newcastle mother of her daughter, who was about to be married. "I should say that I did," was the answer. "Three of the prettiest girls in the town are to be my bridesmaids, and I shall have to look my best or they will outshine me."

Why She Liked Venus.

A lady who saw that her servant girl seemed to take a certain interest in the objects of art in her parlour said to her: "Which one of those figures do you like best, Mary?" "This one, mum," said Mary, pointing to the armless Venus of Milo. "And why do you like the Venus best?" "Sure, it's the aisiest to doost, mum," answered the girl.

A Misunderstanding.

Sweet Little Maiden: "Is there a letter for me?" Important Uniformed Clerk: "Who's me?" Sweet Little Maiden: "I'm Gladys Cummin." Important Official: "Yes, I daresay you are glad he's coming; but what's your name?" Sweet Little Maiden: "How dare you? My name is Gladys Cummin," Important Official: "Oh—oh—I beg your pardon."

Why She Named Baby.

Miss Gush: "And, Ethel, dear, what is the baby's name?" Mrs. Newmother: "I've named him Ethelbert Algernon." Miss Gush: "But I always thought the father named the boys?" Mrs. Newmother: "If you could hear what his father calls him when he is walking the floor with him in the early dawn, you wouldn't wonder that I took matters in my own hands."

Taking it out of the Governor.

Gentleman (to shop assistant): "This seems a good umbrella. Will it wear well?" Assistant: "No. It will fade after the first wetting." Gentleman: "How straightforward! You are an honour to your profession." Assistant: "Oh, it's not that. I proposed to my master's daughter last night, and she rejected me. I am taking it out of the guv'nor."

Chances.

"If I had half a chance I'd marry," remarked a handsome millionaire bachelor to a good-looking girl. "But you never will have," she asserted. "Why not?" he asked, somewhat taken aback. "Because," and she smiled in a way that fascinated him, "every chance in your case is a whole one." It was the merest chance she took, but it netted her a million and a man.

How it was Done.

Mrs. Hicks: "I want you to match a piece of silk for me this morning; but you are such a stupid thing, that I know you will make a blunder." Hicks: "You evidently take me for an idiot. If I mistake the exact shade, texture, or even the make, I will buy you a box of gloves." (An hour later.) "Here, Tape, get me a quarter of a yard like that. If you make a mistake I'll get you sacked. See?"

The Old Problem.

Mrs. Meadow: "I hate to tell you, Mrs. Suburbs, but really, you ought to know it. Every time I've run into the city lately, I've met your husband in the return train, and every time he was paying marked attentions to some woman by his side, and every time it was a different woman. I've seen him with a dozen of 'em." Mrs. Suburbs (quietly): "We have been trying to get a servant girl who would stay."

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DOROTHEA.

A Charming Story of a Misdeed which Brought About a Life Happiness.

Dorothea ran up the long flight of stone steps, and inserted her latch-key in the door of the little flat.

She was out of breath but gay at heart, for her singing had been a success, and life promised better things for herself and Hugh.

The opening so long wished for had come at last, and, perhaps——

She checked herself with a smile, and entered.

The sitting-room was dimly lighted. The lamp was dying out, and only a few red embers showed in the grate.

A chill air momentarily overcame her; Hugh was always out late now.

She went to the door of his bedroom, it was ajar and the room in darkness.

Returning to the sitting-room an envelope placed against the clock on the mantelpiece caught her eye.

It contained a note from her brother.

"When you get this I shall be on my way to America, if I haven't blown my brains out. I've taken three hundred of Drysdale's money, and daren't face him. I hate this narrow money-grubbing existence, with our miserable little economies. I'll write when I'm in safety, and will work like a slave to pay it back, but I feel so jolly miserable that I wish I was dead. I'm a disgrace to you, poor old Dorothea. Good-bye. I can't stand office work any longer."

The scrawled, incoherent note fell from Dorothea's hand.

She glanced round with wide horrified eyes, and for a moment everything whirled before her.

The intense selfishness of the note hardly struck her, it was the disgrace.

Hugh was a thief, at any moment liable to be apprehended.

The lamp flickered and ran up suddenly, then went out, leaving her in darkness, and when dawn crept under the blinds it found her still there looking with uncomprehending eyes into the blackness of the grate. The world outside was awakening, and the commonplace sounds brought Dorothea back to stern facts.

She shivered in her thin evening gown, and glanced about her at the dimly-defined familiar objects in the room.

Each little chair and table, book-shelf, and cushion meant some personal self-denial to herself, not to Hugh. She had worked with a seriousness not customary to twenty years to make home pleasanter to Hugh.

The note lying at her feet caught her gaze, and she shivered, but not with cold this time. Hitherto disgrace had passed them by, and she was glad that neither father nor mother had lived to see their idol's downfall.

She picked up the note and went into her brother's room. It was all in disorder. Every drawer was pulled open, clothes lay in all directions, a half-smoked cigarette and a 'bus ticket lay upon the bed. Everything spoke of hasty departure.

She mechanically closed the gaping chest of drawers, smoothed the counterpane, and folded away the coats, then shut the door behind her as solemnly as though someone lay there dead. She had never relied much upon Hugh, but now for the first time in her life it began to dawn upon her what it meant to be alone.

She changed her gown and made herself a cup of tea, to eat was impossible. Facts had to be faced now. She had made her plans in the silence of the night. She left some directions for the caretaker's wife, and, when it was time, took a 'bus to the city.

Mr. Drysdale had not yet arrived, the clerk told her, and for what seemed interminable cycles of time Dorothea sat waiting.

She found herself going over the events of the previous evening, looking back at herself as at another personality, seeing a girl whose opening had arrived, a girl whose hopes were as fresh as her voice, a girl who had hailed the singing of two songs at a great reception as the first step on the ladder of fame.

She came to herself again when a clerk told her that Mr. Drysdale would see her. She had refused to send in her name.

A sudden light flashed into Drysdale's keen face as she entered. He had been at the reception of the night before, and, unimpressionable man of forty as he was, had been haunted ever since by the singer and the song. He was a man of sudden impulses and strong convictions, and he had told himself unhesitatingly there and then that this was the one woman in the world for him. And now here she was, breaking in upon his thoughts by some strange movement of fate.

The pallor of her face touched him indescribably when he contrasted it with the gaiety of the night before; there was an air of almost terrified appeal in her grey eyes that hurt him and brought the practical side of him uppermost.

He bowed and asked her to be seated, but she only bowed in response, and faced him, her hand pressed against the writing-table as if for support.

"You are Mr. Drysdale?" she asked, "I am Hugh Carmichael's sister—and I have come to explain—to tell you——" Her voice broke off. The grief in her eyes made Drysdale involuntarily glance away for an instant.

"Pray sit down," he said; then, trying to help her out a little, "your brother is not ill, I hope?"

Dorothea drew a quivering breath. How simple that would be to tell; how infinitely easy to say that he was dead.

"He is well," she said, still refusing the proffered chair. "How can I tell you, that he is—that he has——"

"Yes?"

"Stolen your money like any common thief," said Dorothea rapidly. "Oh, I wonder if you can realise the shame it is to tell?"

She sat down and buried her face in her hands.

Drysdale's eyes were keen and alert for a moment as if a half-shaped conviction had taken definite form, then his expression changed again.

He drew a chair forward and sat down.

"I am deeply distressed for you," he said. "Tell me all about it quietly; it may be a relief to talk it over, and I am not pressed for time. I feared that your brother was in difficulties lately, he has been so unlike himself; he was a favourite of mine, you know, such a handsome lad."

Dorothea looked up, gratitude in every quivering line of her face.

"Ah, how kind you are," she exclaimed.

"Where is he?" asked Drysdale quietly.

Dorothea laid the note before him.

"You have a right to keep it, if you like."

Drysdale read it over twice, frowned, and without more ado put it into the fire.

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"You don't mind? He must have been half-mad to write such a note, and we will forget it. Now tell me all about it."

She was sitting in his big padded office chair, and he found a curious pleasure in seeing her there.

"But do you mean to tell me," he said presently, "that you are all alone? That he left you to do battle with the world alone, and at your age?"

"He is only nineteen," said Dorothea, flashing into sudden defence of Hugh, "and young even for his age. He—you see—I am older."

"By about a year, I suppose," said Drysdale bitterly.

He was a lonely man without home-ties, and he often craved for what Hugh had carelessly thrust aside. And to his old-fashioned ideas it seemed altogether wrong that a girl of Dorothea's years and beauty should have to earn her own living and live alone.

"The loneliness would not matter, though I have never tried it," said Dorothea, "if I only knew he was safe and with desirable companions; perhaps I did not do all I might, though," her lip quivered. "I tried to."

"I am sure you did," said Drysdale. "He must have fallen into bad hands. He never had anything to do with the other clerks here out of office hours, I believe, they are all much older. When you hear from him, tell him from me that the debt is cancelled; he is too young to have a weight like that hanging over him, and I assure you that the sum means nothing to me."

"You are very kind, wonderfully kind," said Dorothea, "but it means a great deal to me. I thought it all out in the night, and if you will give me time——"

Drysdale rose and went over to the fireplace.

"But you are not your brother's keeper," he said. "Do you mean that you are taking his debt upon your shoulders?"

There was such evident disapproval in his tone that Dorothea, too, rose and faced him with determination in every line of her slim figure.

"I shall certainly never be happy until the debt is cancelled in the only possible way."

"I could not entertain such an idea for a moment," he said with equal decision.

For a moment they faced one another in silence.

"You would not *dare* to say that to a man," said Dorothea, with quiet passion. "Do you suppose that a debt of honour is any less intolerable to a woman? Can you not understand that I would rather give up all that makes life pleasant, work day and night, to free myself and him. You would do it yourself."

"That is what I fear," he said quietly. "You would deny yourself so much, too much; I know what women are in such a case. Yes, I should do it myself," he hesitated, and Dorothea seized her advantage.

"You will?" coming a little closer. "You have been so kind, be a little kinder still——"

"Since it distresses you," he began, but Dorothea did not wait for more. She thrust a small oblong case into his hand.

"The first instalment," she said almost cheerfully, as for a moment the burden seemed to lighten. "Open it, please."

He pressed the spring and disclosed a small string of pearls with a diamond clasp.

"They are real," said Dorothea, a delicate pink of excitement displacing the pallor of her cheeks, "and my own. They are worth, I believe, nearly two hundred pounds."

Drysdale snapped the case. He was a judge of pearls.

"Rather more I should say," he remarked drily, and handed them back to her.

"You will not take them? They are really my own, and were my mother's and grandmother's before me."

"I thought so; they are heirlooms."

"They are not," said Dorothea, her lip quivering, then she turned aside.

He glanced at the downcast face and frowned perplexedly. He had never been in such an embarrassing position before, and he suddenly felt an absolute brute for refusing.

"Suppose you leave them with me?" he said, "and I will keep them until you can redeem them."

"That will be never," said Dorothea, cheerful once again. "You will get them valued and take the money. Oh, and there is one other thing."

Like a veritable woman she pursued her advantage.

"I brought this too, and it will leave ninety-five."

Drysdale reddened like a schoolboy, and quickly drew back, evading the crisp note.

"My dear Miss Carmichael, there are limits."

Dorothea puckered her brows perplexedly.

"You are really angry this time," she said. "I am sorry, and won't worry you any more now. I can never repay all your kindness and patience."

She began to button her glove preparatory to departure.

"I must give you an acknowledgment," he said, going over to the writing table.

"Please don't trouble," said Dorothea, in an unbusinesslike manner. "I can trust you."

"Will you promise me that if ever you are in need of a friend you will consult me?"

"You are very kind," said Dorothea, "when the debt is paid——"

"Try to forget that miserable sum of money."

"That is impossible," said Dorothea; and the next moment, with a little nod and smile, she was gone.

Drysdale stood for some moments surveying the empty office chair. Then he opened the jewel case and fingered the pearls very gently, laying them out on his palm.

Probably her one piece of jewellery.

He unlocked a drawer, and placed the case carefully beside a small miniature of his mother, who had died at the age of nineteen. He glanced at the girlish face, fancied he could trace in it a likeness to Dorothea, then paused a moment. She had left no address.

"She will come again," he told himself, after trying in vain to ascertain it. But though in the next three months he received two instalments of five pounds each signed Dorothea Carmichael, there was no address.

He studied the post-mark; it was the Strand.

He wearied himself to death at musical evenings; he searched the papers for concert announcements. He was serious in all his undertakings, and in love for the first time very seriously.

For the next two months there was no communication, and then he feared all manner of misfortunes.

She might be ill; alone in rooms; depriving herself of necessaries; she was that kind of girl, he told himself; and, as a matter of fact, he was very near the mark.

Then one day some blessed chance led him to pay a long deferred visit to an artist friend in Chelsea.

It was June now, and a clear, cool day with streamers of white across the blue sky. The river was full of craft, a tug was towing a string of gaudily-painted barges under one of the bridges.

He stopped for a moment to watch them, then turned, and saw Dorothea coming towards him slowly in the sunlight.

A pale and thin Dorothea, but herself none the less.

"You have been ill," he said, taking her hand, and forgetting a more ceremonious greeting.

Dorothea flushed, and then grew deadly pale.

"I am out for the first time," she said. "It was nothing; a touch of influenza and then pneumonia, and I cannot shake it off, try as I will."

Tears of weakness rose in her eyes; he was indescribably shocked at the change in her.

"You have no right to be out alone," he said.

"There is no one——" began Dorothea;

NEXT WEEK'S COVER DEPICTS ANOTHER STRIKING INCIDENT IN OUR NEW SERIAL.

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then bit her lip and flushed, looking away from him at the barges in the river. It was so much to her to see a friendly face, and his, keen and kindly and full of concern, were so emphatically trustworthy.

They had that part of the Embankment to themselves, and were now slowly pacing along in a sudden silence that meant much to both.

"I wish you would take my arm," said Drysdale abruptly.

Dorothea coloured, and shook her head.

"I am much better now," she said. "The quiet and the sunshine are doing me good, and perhaps—yes—the sight of a friendly face of one's own kind. My landlady is well-intentioned according to her lights, but my room is very hot and airless. I am glad, and sorry, to have met you."

"I hope the gladness predominates?"

"Yes," said Dorothea, "though if I were a well-regulated person I suppose the sight of you would be painful to me."

Drysdale looked down at her with a smile that made his grave face very attractive.

"How thankful I feel that you are not well regulated."

Dorothea was looking across the river to the trees on the opposite bank.

"I intended, I wanted"—her voice faltered. "It is so long since I sent——"

"Is that paltry sum of money always to come between us and our friendship?" he exclaimed hotly, then checked himself. "We are going to be friends?"

"Yes," said Dorothea, with a piteous attempt at resolution. "Afterwards!"

"Now," he said curtly. "You have more than paid the debt; am I not the richer by a pearl necklace?"

Dorothea smiled faintly.

"You have it still? I meant you to sell it if you liked."

"But you did not think I should?"

She shook her head.

"I have it locked safely away in a drawer at my office where I keep a little miniature of the mother I never knew. I should like you to see it one day."

"Thank you," said Dorothea.

Her head was turned aside; he could only see the thin oval of her cheek.

"What do you do without the little necklace when you go out in the evening? I wish you would let me send it back to you."

"I never go out now," said Dorothea incautiously. "You see my voice deserted me for a time, and engagements are few and far between: one drops out somehow."

He put two and two together with wonderful rapidity.

"Now listen to me," he said severely. "I am just double your age"—it was a sum he had gone over not once but many times—"and you have no one else to tell you that you are killing yourself by inches. You do not seem to care whether you live or die." Dorothea's face quivered.

"Why should I care?" she said, with a sudden passionate intensity, as the control of months broke down. "Who is there to care whether I live or die? I am ashamed to meet the few friends I had. It is the loneliness that is so intolerable; the feeling that no one in the breadth of London cares."

Drysdale studied the kerb, his keen face had suddenly grown very gentle.

"I suppose you would hardly believe me if I said I cared," he remarked quietly. "That in the length and breadth of London you are the one being I have thought of and searched for this many a day? However, we will leave that point for the present. There is a cab lurking about for a fare; let us have lunch together as a bond of good fellowship."

His voice and bearing had changed again.

"No," said Dorothea firmly; but her face had flushed into a new beauty. "My lunch is waiting for me."

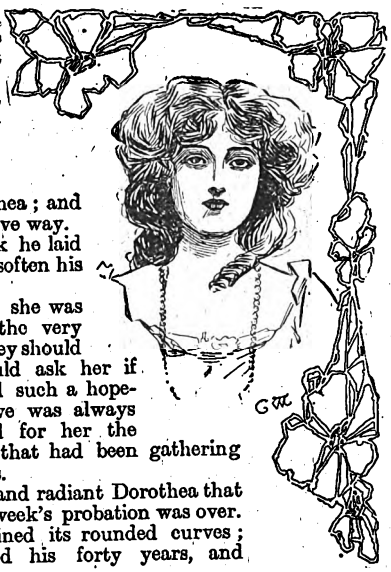
"A good one?"

"Excellent," she spoke mendaciously, and afterwards ate rice pudding and bread and butter with some compunction.

"You will give me your address this time?"

She suddenly flushed a painful crimson.

"I have left the flat, and it is better, you must not come. You will trust me?"



"I will, if you promise to meet me here to-morrow at the same time."

"This day next week," said Dorothea; "just for a few minutes."

"To-morrow."

"No," said Dorothea; and he had perforce to give way.

All that long week he laid plans by which to soften his obdurate debtor.

He was alone and she was alone; it seemed the very irony of fate that they should be apart. He would ask her if twenty years seemed such a hopeless disparity. Love was always young, and he had for her the stored-up affection that had been gathering all these lonely years.

It was a changed and radiant Dorothea that met him when the week's probation was over. Her face had regained its rounded curves; he suddenly realised his forty years, and sighed involuntarily.

She put a letter into his hand—breathlessly, without waiting for another greeting.

"It is from Hugh," she said; "he is in America. And see, he has sent ten dollars as a first instalment. He is working on a farm. Perhaps it will be the making of him. Such an affectionate letter!"

Drysdale read it, while she looked over his shoulder and read it too, though she knew every word by heart.

"And now I suppose we may be friends?" asked Drysdale; and as he spoke he drew out a small oblong case.

"Yes," said Dorothea.

"And you will take it back?"

Together they looked at the little string of pearls lying on his palm.

"Yes," said Dorothea again, "as a gift from you. It is yours to do with as you like."

"Dorothea, am I too old to be more than a friend?"

"Old," exclaimed Dorothea indignantly, "you are not old."

"Older than yourself by twenty years," he said slowly; "and twenty years means a great difference."

The Embankment was quite deserted.

Dorothea began with apparent absence of mind to twist the little necklace round his fingers. Then she inserted her own and looked up, her eyes shining through a happy mist.

"Some people might think so," she said softly, "but what does it matter when we do not agree with them."

J. M. B.

Mr. C. B. FRY

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CRICKET to the

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The NORTH EXPRESS
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CHAPTER XXVII.

The Narrative of Ruth Cordelvin.

"The discovery has not prostrated me with horror, as it might have been expected to do, because, as a matter of fact, I had prepared myself for the worst. But the confirmation of my fears has opened my eyes to the vile character of Roderick Vanstone. He is a man absolutely without scruple, a man without one atom of morality—an iniquitous monster.

"Yet I am powerless to end his evil-doing. For the haunting idea of my life grows and grows. I fear to speak to the police, for surely that would lead to my own examination and incarceration. Some day, perhaps, I shall conquer the great repugnance I have, and boldly tell the whole truth to those who should know it. Meanwhile I can watch the monster. . . . I have brought my poor brother's amputated limb home, and have carefully preserved it in spirits—have put it 'in pickle,' as the doctors used to say years ago in Melbourne, when I was a nurse at the hospital there. In this way I can keep the arm, so that if the time ever comes for identification purposes, I shall be ready.

"There is much in this business which I cannot understand. According to the papers, the dead body of Felix Cordelvin has been discovered, minus an arm, among the ruins of Moulstone Castle. I am startled. Can Vanstone have killed my brother and conveyed his body to the place named? It is a matter I must investigate at once. If he has dared to kill poor Felix, why then, nothing will remain for me to do than——

"Thank Heaven! I have been down to Moulstone. I have seen the body of the dead man. It is not my brother, although everybody thinks it is, and truly the resemblance is striking. . . . But the discovery that it is not my brother brings with it a puzzle to confront me. What is the mystery in all this? Why has my brother been kidnapped, and why has another man been put in his place Plainly it is for the purpose of mixing identities. But with what object? That I have no means at present of knowing. Later, perhaps, I shall learn. Now I can only carefully watch and wait.

"Another incident has occurred to add to my wonder. Last night I encountered Gerald Mortimer again—the same man whom I met some days ago at Moulstone. I was on the Embankment, in London, at the time, whither I had gone after following the two Vanstones to the Savoy Hotel, where they dined. While I paced up and down the Embankment a thick fog came on, and, getting tired of waiting, I was trying to find my way to Temple station. This, in the dense fog, was not an easy task, and I had to ask my way of the first person I met. To my utter astonishment this proved to be Gerald Mortimer. He recognised me, too, and got quite importunate with questions. He seemed to suspect me, and I began to be afraid. Fortunately, however, in my satchel I had some sand, which I always carry, and I blinded him with this and so got away. But the encounter has made me nervous; I fear that this man may meet me again at any moment and give me in charge of the police; for, he evidently thinks I have something to do with the murder at Moulstone. Although, of course, this is not so, I am still afraid, because if I come into contact with the police they will, I am sure, have me shut up.

"Last night was eventful again. I had previously sent Vanstone an anonymous letter, intending to give him a scare. I hinted broadly that what he had buried in the shrubbery was no longer there. So last night I went over to Brixton Hill to watch the result of my letter. Everything turned out just as I expected. Late at night the two Vanstones issued from the house and at once made for the shrubbery. They dug at the same spot where they had buried my brother's arm. I could see them hard at work, and I could hear their mumbling as occasionally they paused for a few moments' rest. I was not near enough to hear exactly what they said, but I shall never forget the look upon their faces of mingled amazement and terror when they discovered that the arm was really gone. It so gratified me to frighten these two villains that I could not restrain my inclination to laugh aloud. I did laugh, two or three times, and then the younger Vanstone came after me. I ran away towards the gate, but he ran too fast, and overtook me. He questioned me, and would have attacked me, I think, but I had provided myself with a revolver, and I kept him off with that. Then the elder Vanstone came up, and he was about to take hold of me, but once again a handful of sand thrown into his eyes disabled him for a time, and in the confusion that ensued I made my escape through the gate. I am really pleased with myself for the scare I have given them. I shall scare them a good many times more, I hope. But I shall have to be very careful, for now they will doubtless try to get me in their clutches. . . . But all these things, after all, are side issues, and the main problem still confronts me: Why have they kidnapped my brother? What are they going to do with him? My head aches with anxiety. Oh, if I only had the courage to go to the police!"

* * * * *

Inspector Trench laid down his pen. He had come to the last of the entries in Ruth Cordelvin's diary, and had copied out the valuable portions thereof. He filled his pipe, leant back in his chair, and with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, set to thinking. His mouth was hard set, his brow contracted.

"Well," he murmured to himself, after a full ten minutes' pondering, "there's only one thing to be done; these two Vanstones will have to be arrested. I don't know where they are, but, if needs be, the world will have to be ransacked rom end to end to find them. Good Heavens! What a pair of scoundrels! Ruth Cordelvin didn't know some of the things I know, otherwise she would never have been puzzled about the dead man found at Moulstone. Now that I've read her narrative, everything is as plain as a pikestaff. Let's just run over the case. One man—Anthony Cordelvin—is rich; but owing to mental incapacity his estates are managed by Roderick Vanstone. As long as Anthony Cordelvin lives, Vanstone can do as he likes, practically—can play ducks and drakes with Cordelvin's money; and he's just the sort of man to do it.

"But supposing Anthony Cordelvin dies, then Miss Penhurst, the next heir, steps in, and Roderick Vanstone is

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deposed. Well, assuming that Vanstone *has* played ducks and drakes with the Cordelvin money, he is faced with rather a serious difficulty. To him the life of Anthony Cordelvin is everything—his death would be calamitous. Assuming once more, then, that Anthony Cordelvin falls ill, Vanstone gets into a dreadful funk. If Cordelvin dies, Vanstone will be ruined, and disgraced, and punished.

"But Vanstone isn't going to submit tamely; moreover, he is a man of resource. If there is a way to cheat justice, he will do it. He knows that Anthony Cordelvin has a cousin named Felix Cordelvin; and he knows, too, that Felix has come to England from Australia, and has got shut up in Moulstone Asylum. He is aware also—*and this is the most vital point*—that the two Cordelvins bear a striking resemblance one to the other. If anything happens to Anthony, Felix can fill his place.

"But as it is uncertain when Anthony will die, it might be just a little bit difficult to put Felix in his place just at the right moment. What is the remedy? Simply this: that he must kidnap Felix Cordelvin at once, and get him to his—Vanstone's—house. Then Anthony Cordelvin must die. To die naturally, of course, would be the best—but he must die; and he must be taken and placed in the neighbourhood of Moulstone Asylum, so that when his body is discovered the asylum people will take it for granted that the dead man is the patient who escaped a few days before—Felix Cordelvin. The similarity between the cousins is sufficient to guarantee the success of such a plan. Once bring that about—get Anthony buried as Felix—then, of course, it will be easy for Felix to live with Vanstone as Anthony.

"There!" exclaimed the detective to himself, after thus reviewing the case; "that's about the length and breadth of the whole business, I think. There are one or two little things which I can't account for—a join here and there which won't dovetail—but I fancy my theory is pretty near the mark. And now, having satisfied myself, and finished my pipe, I think I'll go to bed."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Struggle on the Cliff.

To travellers by boat down the Thames estuary a sight is observable, on the starboard side, of two twin towers, built a great while ago, and known to all the world of visitors to Kentish watering-places, as the Reculvers.

Upon a stone slab among the ruins of the church of which the towers alone remain intact, sat two men—Roderick and Stephen Vanstone. Both looked careworn, both looked dusty and travel-stained. From Birchington, distant some miles, they had walked that morning.

Exactly why they had come to this desolate spot, neither could have told. Mile after mile they had walked in brooding silence, and now, while they rested after their toilsome journey, the atmosphere of gloomy foreboding still surrounded them.

Suddenly Stephen Vanstone moved in his seat and shivered.

"Why have we come here?" he demanded almost fiercely. "Why have we come to this cold and gloomy place?"

His father answered him not a word.

"Do you hear?" repeated the younger man with another shiver. "Why have you brought me to this place?"

Roderick Vanstone raised his chin from off his breast, and heaved a deep sigh.

"I haven't brought you here, Stephen," he retorted. "I had no idea of coming here when we started. But we walked on and on, and—well, as we *are* here, perhaps it's as good a place as any. Such a desolate spot as this—where the houses are few and people scarce, may be safer for us than elsewhere."

"Safer for *us!*" said the other angrily. "Look here, guv'nor, all along you've connected me with this infernal business, when, as a matter of fact, I've had little to do with it."

"Whatever has been done," gloomily rejoined the elder man, "has been done with your knowledge, and largely for your sake."

"Oh, it's all very fine to say that now we're in this pickle."

(*Continued on page 636.*)

French Girl or English Girl.

WHICH IS THE PRETTIER DANCER?

FRENCH maids are renowned for their vivaciousness in dancing; English damsels for their stateliness. The question is, which characteristic is most pleasing. An important point, however, which must not be overlooked, is that of health and strength. No person can dance well unless in absolute good health. Languor or dizziness—which invariably rise out of indigestion—are ailments which make life miserable and devoid of happiness. Bile Beans for Biliousness, however, are a certain cure for these ailments, and also for skin eruptions, pimples, and all blood impurities. Proof of this is given in the case of Mr. George Blanchard, of Morley Street, Kettering, recently interviewed by a *Kettering Guardian* reporter, and he told, for the purpose of publication, the following startling facts:

"It will be seventeen years ago that first I began to suffer from indigestion. This became chronic, and in the end I was brought down to the threshold of death." I had acute pains in the stomach and right side, with continual belching and rifting, and with occasional vomiting of my food. Sometimes in the morning I should feel fairly well, but before I got to work the pains would come on. I should also be taken with dizziness, and would perspire terribly. Sometimes I was so bad that my mates used to say, 'He'll die at work.' At other times I should be unable to go to my work for a week or a fortnight at a time. All this while I was losing flesh. I could only take liquid food, and I became so wasted that my limbs were like those of a baby. The doctor said he could do nothing for me, and I should never again be better. I fully believed that I was about to die. Owing to my acute sufferings life has lost its pleasures, and death had lost the terrors it would have for a healthy person. At this climax my wife read about Bile Beans for Biliousness, and the wonderful cures they had effected. We had some procured and I took them. By the time I had finished the second box I felt a great deal better. Bit by bit they improved me, and my spirits began to revive. I became so vastly improved that I could once more digest solid food. The pains after eating, the dizziness, and all the other symptoms of my long illness gradually disappeared—my strength increased, I regained the flesh I had lost, and could once more eat and enjoy my meals. I am now perfectly restored to health, and can do a hard day's work. A few months back I could not bear anyone to even touch me on the chest, but now, look here! (Here Mr. Blanchard beat his chest energetically). It seems impossible to believe that so great a change could be brought about in any man as Bile Beans have effected in me," he continued; "and I sometimes wonder what the doctors who attended me, and gave me up, would say if they could see me now." Such is the record of this wonderful case. Bile Beans for Biliousness, which effected the above cure, are unequalled for all cases of indigestion of however long standing. They are also a certain cure for dizziness, pains in the back and chest, loss of appetite, weakness, flatulence, colds, chills, liver and kidney disorders, sleeplessness, palpitation, anæmia, all female ailments, constipation, piles, and as a preventative of influenza. Obtainable of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine.

"Well, well, Stephen, my boy, since we are in this pickle, don't let's quarrel. We've got clear from Brixton Hill—that's something. Warrants are out for our arrests—all the papers say so—but the police don't know where we are. That's *some* consolation, isn't it?"

"Precious little consolation in this!" growled the younger man, shivering again with cold and trepidation. "Precious little consolation to be hunted like some wild beast—to have to keep out of the way of prying eyes—to be obliged to avoid people who might want to converse! It may be consolation to you, who have brought all this about, but it's very little to me, I assure you."

The father's eyes flashed angrily at his son's bitter words. But he restrained himself and answered nothing.

"Just because," the son went on, "you have chosen for years past to take money which wasn't yours, and to let your crimes get you into a mess from which you could only be extricated by committing greater crimes—it's pretty hard luck to be coupled with you."

Again the father's eyes flashed. Still he spoke no word. Stephen Vanstone's wrath increased at the other's silence.

"It's bad enough," he continued, "to have for a father a man who's a thief and a murderer, but to——"

Further words were strangled in the younger man's throat. For, stung to fury by what had been said, Roderick Vanstone had sprung up and thrown himself upon his son.

In a moment Stephen Vanstone realised his peril. In his parent's eyes there was a frenzy of madness; through his tightly clenched teeth there trickled round the corners of his lips a ghastly froth.

With a great effort Stephen tried to throw his father off. But in vain. The grip upon his throat tightened, and all he could do was to clutch the elder man's wrist and shoulder. By this means he was able in some measure to maintain his balance and to prevent his father from obtaining complete mastery over him.

Thus they strove one with the other—staggering hither and thither among the ancient tombs, and inwardly consumed with a fierce unnatural hatred. Though ordinarily, Stephen, by virtue of his youth, could have overpowered his father, yet now, the latter, in his paroxysm of frenzied madness, seemed to be endowed with triple strength.

Slowly and surely he bore his son back, back, till between them and the brown beach far below, was nothing but the railing which topped the steep cliff upon which the ruins stood.

Instinctively Stephen Vanstone realised his imminent peril. Fiercely he struggled to press his father back, gurgling out a curse as he did so. No use! For Roderick Vanstone was in the very throes of homicidal mania. Backward, inch by inch, he pushed his son; then, without relinquishing his terrible grip on the throat, which was turning the younger man's face purple, he suddenly grasped his son round the body, and, with a mighty effort, lifted him over the rails and hurled him down.

Then, as his chest heaved with his violent exertion, he clutched the rails with both his hands, and leant forward over them, trying to peer down.

A moment later the sounds of voices giving forth excited shouts behind him, made him turn.

Three men were approaching—a coastguard and two others. They advanced at a run.

Roderick Vanstone looked about him for a means of escape, but the men were now too close. So, with his back to the railing, he stood quietly awaiting them. His jaw, previously set, had dropped now; his eyes, which just before, were blazing with madness, had dulled to a lead colour; his arms and hands, previously imbued with unnatural strength and energy, hung limp and nerveless at his side; his head sank on to his breast.

The newcomers, who had witnessed the final deed of his madness, halted in amazement at his passive demeanour. One of the men, recovering his presence of mind, demanded what he had done. Roderick Vanstone merely replied in a voice that seemed choked—

"I have killed him. Take me! I have killed my son."

There were shouts and murmurings from the foot of the cliff now—for others had rushed to the spot upon which Stephen Vanstone had been cast—shouts and murmurings as of men startled and horrified by sudden tragedy. In one brief moment the life had been dashed out of Stephen Vanstone!

Without a word more, without the least show of resistance, with only silent shaping of his lips and slow dazed movement of his eyes, Roderick Vanstone was taken to a place of security, pending the arrival of the police.

* * * * *

On the bed in the infirmary of a great prison lies a man sorely sick—sick unto death.

Those who knew the man, hale and vigorous, a few months before, would surely now never recognise him as Roderick Vanstone.

But he it is. White is his hair, thin and pallid his face, lean and attenuated his limbs. Vainly have the prison doctors tried to

> . . Minister to a mind diseas'd,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart.

The sickness of Roderick Vanstone was too subtle, too deep for physic. He was now doomed to die. Under the ban of death in any case he was; for twelve good men and true had found him guilty of murder—double murder; the murder by strychnia poisoning of Anthony Cordelvin, and the murder of his own son; and a robed judge had given utterance to the most solemn of formal legal decrees, donning the black cap as he did so. But in the intervening days that remained for Roderick Vanstone to live, this mortal sickness had stricken him, and now threatened to come between the man who had so sinned against his fellows, and the gallows.

Roderick Vanstone was doomed to die, and he did die. But, ere the last signs of lingering life passed out of his body, he had emptied his guilt-laden mind into the ears of an ever-sympathetic chaplain.

To the latter he told everything—everything relating to himself which has been told herein—and more. Of all his extensive defalcations he spoke, of his fear of discovery, of his desperate resort, when Anthony Cordelvin fell ill, to kill him, and to put in his place Felix Cordelvin, the cousin who so closely resembled him.

Inspector Trench, too, was present by the bedside when the statement was made, and he, in his turn, was able to communicate the full facts to Gerald Mortimer and Dr. Branksome.

The detective read over to them his extracts from Ruth Cordelvin's diary, and explained to them how the substitution of Felix for Anthony Cordelvin had been effected.

"Roderick Vanstone," he said, "was almost alone in knowing of the remarkable likeness between the two cousins. He planned the substitution some months before it was brought about. He was a desperate man, you see, and when Anthony Cordelvin fell ill, he at once arranged for the kidnapping of Felix, bribing a warder at the asylum and getting him away as the diary shows. Once Felix was in Vanstone's house, Vanstone promptly administered an overdose of strychnia to Anthony, and then, with the help of his son and his two men-servants, Stebbings and Burge, who are now, as you know, doing long terms for their part in the affair, he managed to convey the body of Anthony Cordelvin to the ruins, where it was found. How he did this didn't come out at the trial, but he told the chaplain and myself. The body was brought down in a huge case which was supposed to contain a piano. The case was afterwards smashed up, and the wood of which it was made thrown into the river."

"But there is one thing," remarked Gerald, "which I can't quite make out. I know, of course, from the trial, that Anthony Cordelvin had been minus an arm for many years, and that, in order to complete the substitution of the two men,

(*Concluded on page 639.*)

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HEADACHE.

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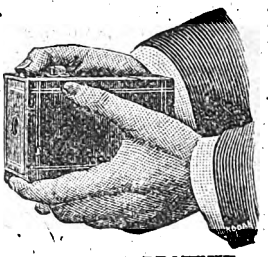

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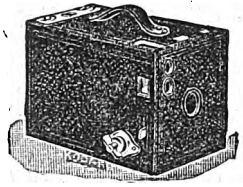

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Dr. Manisty amputated the arm of Felix Cordelvin. But, if you remember, when the body was found in the ruins the missing arm had evidently been *hacked* off, not amputated by a surgeon."

"Oh! that was done by Vanstone himself," explained Inspector Trench. "Don't you see, if the body had been discovered with merely an amputated arm, it would have been possible for the doctors to have told at once that it wasn't the man they thought it to be. As Dr. Branksome here will tell you, it is possible to tell, within a reasonable time, the date of an amputation; and it was, of course, known in the asylum that both Felix Cordelvin's arms were sound. Therefore, the only way for Roderick Vanstone to make his fraud complete, was to sever the arm above the previous amputation, and make it look as if after the man had been murdered, the murderer had cut off an arm as an additional act of butchery."

"Well," murmured Gerald Mortimer, "it has been a terrible business—the most terrible that I've ever heard of. But it is all over now, thank goodness, and I suppose we may forgive the principals. Roderick Vanstone killed Anthony Cordelvin, and killed his own son—and now he is dead himself. Burge and Stebbings, his accomplices, are in prison for long terms, and that poor, miserable catspaw of his, Dr. Manisty, is likewise suffering the penalty of his wrongdoing. Have you heard how Felix Cordelvin is, Inspector?"

"Yes, I heard the other day," answered the detective. "Since the murder of his sister and his subsequent confinement at Broadmoor, he is strangely altered, they say. Mad enough, of course, to warrant his life-long incarceration, he is yet sane enough to know what he has done. His grief as he recalls the circumstances of his sister's death is, I am told, dreadful to see; his life seems to be one long fit of agonised repentance. Ah, me! it's a strange world."

* * * * *

It is a lovely day in early summer—a bright, happy June day—all sunshine, blooming hedgerows, green trees, and singing birds. We are at Moulstone again; but Moulstone under quite a different aspect. Now on this morning there are no terrorised villagers thrilled by stories of escapes from the asylum, or murders among the Castle ruins.

At the Manor House all is excitement still; but to-day it is the excitement of happiness—happiness caused by the all-absorbing topic of everybody in the place, an inkling of which is heralded to the neighbourhood by the bells of the old ivy-clad church away yonder on the hill.

Merry marriage-bells indeed they are, and they are heard here in Moulstone—the bridegroom's home—because the bride herself, Nina Penhurst, is fatherless and motherless. For Nina is indeed the bride and Gerald Mortimer the bridegroom. The happiest bride and bridegroom in the world they are, and, if the unanimous testimony of the village goes for anything, the handsomest.

Sufferings they have endured in the past—sufferings out of the usual run. But all are over now. The dark cloud which but a few months before overshadowed both their young lives, is removed; the golden future beckons them forward with promises of sunshine and peace. Both realise that happiness is now to be their portion, and, as they stand upon the altar steps side by side, with heads bent in reverence, both their hearts swell in joyful gratitude to that benign Providence which has brought them out of the dark days of experience into the glad days of mutual love and trust.

THE END.

TO THOSE WHO WRITE.

A Prize of One Guinea will be paid every week by the Editor for the best short story sent in by any of his readers. Contributions should not be less than 1,500 words in length, and not more than 3,000. The Editor reserves to himself the right to publish any contribution submitted. Stamped addressed envelopes must be enclosed for the return of the stories, but, while every care will be taken, the Editor cannot hold himself responsible for possible loss of MSS.

RESULT OF TOWNS NAME-HUNTING COMPETITION.

A HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE competitors sent in correct lists of solutions, so the prizes have all been lumped together, and the £16, to which 2s. 11d. has been added, has been divided, each competitor receiving 2s. 7d. Lists of winners can be had on application. Below are given the solutions:

1, Canterbury; 2, Aldershot; 3, Dunstable; 4, Harrogate; 5, Leek; 6, Wakefield; 7, Bannockburn; 8, Middleton; 9, Wellington; 10, Poole; 11, Runcorn; 12, Risca; 13, Sevenoaks; 14, Bridgend; 15, Oldham; 16, Chislehurst; 17, Kew; 18, Hackney; 19, Guildford; 20, Slough; 21, Queenstown; 22, Bath; 23, Ware; 24, Margate; 25, Liversedge; 26, Featherstone; 27, Stirling; 28, Blaydon; 29, Horbury; 30, Mallow; 31, Sligo; 32, Hastings; 33, Sunderland; 34, Sale; 35, Grays; 36, Bray; 37, Deal; 38, Broadstairs; 39, Rhyl: 40, Dukinfield.

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By Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of Short Stories.*]*

The Inferior Half.

"K. T. R." is his uncle's heir in a business, but has fallen in love with one of the employées. He has not mentioned it to her, but believes she returns his sentiment. He knows his parents would not sanction an engagement. How should he act? I imagine from your handwriting, "K. T. R.," that you have not yet arrived at years of discretion. I think you should continue not to say anything at all to the girl. There is, of course, no reason why a future proprietor of a business should not marry an employée, but you are too young as yet to know whether the girl would make you the wife you will need when your position becomes a good one.

There are many cases of the sons of large employers falling in love with and marrying factory girls, but I do not know of one case in which such a marriage has been a success. It is worse for a man to marry beneath him in the social scale than for a woman to do so, as one's relations look much more askance on a wife lacking in refinement and breeding than a husband, whose success in business is held to exempt him from criticism of his social standing. Beware, "K. T .R.," of marrying a girl you think you may live to be ashamed of. It will spell unhappiness for both of you in years to come. So wait a time and see if you think of her in the same way a year hence.

❦❦❦

The Fatal Number Three.

I have had many letters, I am sorry to say, from married men who confide in me their attachments to women other than their wives. I am far from being so narrow-minded as to say that it is unnatural for married people to form other attachments after a year or so of married life. Unfortunately such cases are only too frequent. But my correspondents must understand that no advice is possible as to their procedure under such circumstances. The only condemnation I have to offer is that they should have allowed themselves to even consider the possibility of forming attachments for those from whom they are barred by law.

In connection with this question I must tell "F. E. W." (a married man) that he has done very wrong indeed in making love to a girl and keeping from her the fact that he was married. He must at once tell her the truth, or the consequences will afterwards be fatal for both of them. No right-minded girl can have any regard for a man who has thus deceived her, and it is better that "F. E. W." should part from her on terms of esteem than contempt, which she must undoubtedly entertain for him when the truth leaks out. At the same time I am sorry for both my correspondent, his wife, and the girl he professes to love, that their relations with each other are so hardly grouped by Fate.

❦❦❦

Cures Wanted.

"Lena" has a young man who is continually making bad puns. She endured this for a time, but the habit is beginning to pall on her. She asks me how she can cure him of the habit. I can imagine no better way than for "Lena" to let him "hear himself as others hear him," by indulging in bad puns herself for a while just to let him see what agony can be caused from the practice.

A similar complaint comes from "Saxon," who is engaged to a girl who has a fatal gift of mimicry. No matter who it is, she finds some characteristic about them which she at once imitates. "Saxon" fears that this habit may develop in after life to the detriment of their happiness. I don't think "Saxon" need very much fear this. Mimicry is largely a survival of a schoolgirl habit, and when married, he will find his sweetheart will probably drop it. At the same time, if clever, mimicry adds no small enjoyment to life, provided always it is humorous and not malicious in intent.

❦❦❦

Influence.

"Bessie" wants to get employment as a stewardess on a liner, and wishes to know what procedure to take. Like everything else, it is very necessary to bring one's name before the company through the aid of a friend having influence. The applications for employment of this kind are so numerous that companies rarely engage persons whose credentials are not known to them. As "Bessie" has a friend who is a retired naval commander, she should get him to write to the companies on her behalf, and perhaps in that way it will be possible to get her application considered. Advertisements of this character occasionally appear in shipping papers, a list of which will be found in the directory, and "Bessie" should carefully study these.

❦❦❦

A Case for Resistance.

Certainly, "G. S.," you should stand out against attaching yourself to a lady thirty years your senior. For your parents to attempt to link you, a youth of nineteen, to one more than old enough to be your mother, because of her money, is quite preposterous. I should not be so emphatic were you six years older, and able to decide whether a marriage with a middle-aged woman would be satisfactory to you, but as yet you can scarcely realise what such a match entails, and should not on any account lend yourself to it. If the lady likes you sufficiently well to offer to adopt you, you might accept the suggestion with advantage. Many young men have worked their way into professions as a result of patronage of this kind. But marriage should be out of the question.

❦❦❦

The Bird in the Bush.

"Eva" has been engaged to Jack for a year, but has grown tired of him. He is one of those unsuspicious beings who have never dreamt of such a possibility, taking her continued devotion to him as a matter of course. However, she has no doubt in her mind now that she could never be happy with Jack, in spite of his good qualities, as, to put it frankly, he bores her. Now Tom has appeared on the scene, and she has fallen in love with him, but he shows no signs of reciprocating. This she believes is due to his unwillingness to trespass in Jack's preserves. Should she break off her engagement with Jack, in the hope that Tom returns her love?

If "Eva" feels that she cannot be happy with Jack, she should, in my opinion, break off the engagement. To marry him and not care for him must be the prelude to trouble. As to her intimacy with Tom, that should follow a distinct severance with Jack. If Tom really cares for her, he will make advances on hearing of her breach with Jack, but will certainly not do so until the engagement has been broken off. It is, of course, a terrible thing to have to break off an engagement, but a temporary blow to one is better than a permanent disunion between two.

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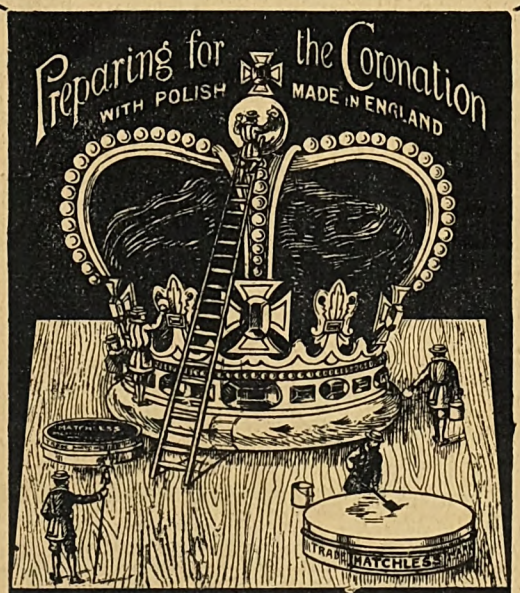

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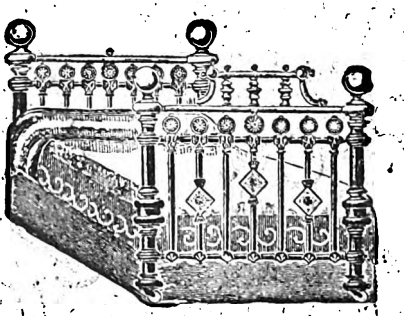

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 699.] For the Week Ending May 24th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

If you Missed Last Week's Instalment, Read this Summary of the First Chapters.

JOHN MANSFIELD, a wealthy banker, Esther, his only child, Alec Scarsdale, his confidential clerk, and Seaton Revelle, a gentleman who had made the banker's acquaintance on the Continent, are seated together under the verandah of Mr. Mansfield's house, partaking of afternoon tea.

"It's an extraordinary thing that even in the privacy of one's home one can't get away from business," the banker was remarking. "Only this afternoon an utter stranger called upon me—a bearded, sunburnt fellow, just home from South Africa. . . . and took from round his waist a money-belt stuffed with bank-notes and diamonds, and wanted me to take charge of it. . . . He was so persistent that I agreed to lock the belt in my safe and return it to him on Monday."

The stranger informed the banker that he had made the pile in four years.

"Extraordinary!" said Seaton Revelle, "It will probably take him less than four years to spend it. Easily won, they say, easily lost."

Shortly afterwards Revelle writes a letter to a Benjamin Beard in London, which he posts himself. During his absence, Alec Scarsdale, who is treated by the banker almost as his own son, tells Mr. Mansfield of his love for Esther, and, with tears in his eyes, the old man gives the pair his fondest blessing.

That same evening, Esther and Alec go for a walk in the beautiful woods which are situated close to "The Woodlands," Mr. Mansfield's house. Their loving embraces are watched by Revelle, who silently chuckles as he thinks of the change which will shortly take place as a consequence of this important letter to London.

The next afternoon there is another meeting in the wood. This time between Seaton Revelle and a gentleman from London named Benjamin Beard. A whispered conversation takes place, and a little packet of powder passes into Revelle's possession.

"Half of that, Marquis, is quite sufficient to induce sleep," says Benny. A few more confidences, then, "Ta-ta, Marquis, till to-night." Revelle answers "Till to-night, Benny."

Later in the evening Mr. Mansfield, Scarsdale, and Revelle are seated in the smoking-room, enjoying cigars.

"Alec," said the banker, "it's about time I had my night-cap. Be a good fellow and mix it for me—you know my dose."

Scarsdale mixes drinks for all three.

A few minutes later, Revelle manages to drop some powder into the banker's glass.

"Well, gentlemen," presently remarks the banker, "I don't know how you feel, but I'm feeling remarkably sleepy. I say, Alec, what have you been doing with the whisky? It's left a curious taste in my mouth."

"I don't know. Mine tasted right enough," replied Scarsdale.

"My imagination, perhaps, or else I've over-smoked myself."

Late that night a figure cycles up to "The Woodlands," and waits below the dining-room windows.

Suddenly the window is noiselessly opened. "The old man's sleeping like a log, I've got the key." The voice was Revelle's and his listener Benny. Quietly the two men steal to the safe, unlock it, and extract the belt. Just then, Benny, in his excitement, knocks over a vase, and almost immediately footsteps are heard descending the stairs. An instant later, and Scarsdale, fully dressed, enters the room with a candle. But a tremendous blow from Revelle knocks him senseless.

"Go, Benny, go!" Revelle urges, "ride like the devil, I'm going to raise the alarm—it's my only chance."

To put the key in Scarsdale's hand, and the remaining half of the powder in his waistcoat pocket is the work of a moment. While Revelle is still bending over Scarsdale's prostrate body, the servants rush in, alarmed by Revelle's shouts. "One's escaped, but I've got the other," cries Seaton Revelle.

It was past four o'clock in the morning when Scarsdale was marched to the police-station, Esther alone believing him innocent, although the key and powder were found in his possession.

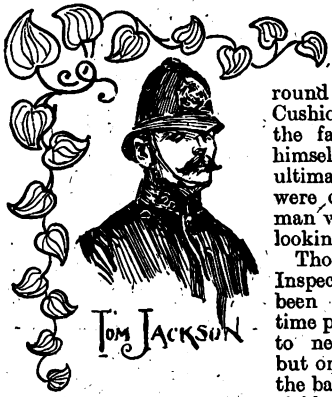
Next day the crime is the one topic of conversation in the district. In the "Crown and Cushion" no doubt is entertained that Scarsdale is guilty, but where is the other man?

Just then a stranger enters and the landlord eyes him suspiciously and secretly sends for the police. Two stalwart young constables arrive. One of them taps the stranger on the shoulder. The stranger looks up and his eyes sparkle with pleasure.

"Freddie!" he cried. "Well I never! So they've drafted you down here!"

"Uncle!" cried the young constable; then laughed loudly.

"Goodman," he continued, addressing the landlord, "do you know who this suspicious person is? He is Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard!"



CHAPTER VI.

(Continued.)

A loud laugh went up from those assembled round the bar of the Crown and Cushion, in which, in spite of the fact that it was against himself, the worthy landlord ultimately joined. Then all eyes were centred on the quiet little man with kindly face. He was looking a trifle embarrassed now.

Though Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, had been in retirement for some time past, his name was familiar to nearly every soul present; but only his name, and those at the bar found it hard to believe that this homely-looking, amiable little individual was the famous Crump, the one-time terror of the criminal fraternity, and yet Cully Scott's best friend. Everyone promptly tried to get into conversation with him, and gather his opinions of the sensational crime of the previous night, and would have felt highly honoured had he permitted them to purchase him liquid refreshment. But Crump, after thanking everybody for their kind intentions, and having politely declined to discuss the robbery on the grounds that it was in far more competent hands than his own, and he had long since retired from business, wished everybody a cheery good-morning, and left the inn with the stalwart young constable who had been summoned to arrest him.

"Freddie," he said, with a twinkle of his eyes, "I enjoyed that little joke; but I think it was about time to clear out. The situation was getting a little embarrassing. Give a dog a bad name—you know, Freddie! My past is always haunting me. But now, my dear lad, I want to have a quiet chat with you. When do you come off duty?"

"I was just coming off when I was sent to arrest you!"

"Ah! Very well. Slip back to the station, get into *mufti*, and we'll have a stroll and a quiet chat"—and the little man's kindly face was beaming all over—"Meeting you like this, unexpectedly, Freddie, in spite of the fact that you meant running me in, is most delightful!"

"Same here, uncle!" said the stalwart young fellow. "If you don't mind waiting a couple of minutes for me, I'll slip off and change!"

"Certainly," said Crump, "and one moment! If you should have occasion to introduce me to anyone, don't drag in my past!"

And it was not affectation on the part of Crump. He was genuinely modest. He objected to be paraded about as late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard.

The young constable hurried off. Crump followed him with his eyes.

"And it only seems yesterday," he muttered, "that you were a little mite, and used to come round to my rooms with your sister Katie, and I used to show you conjuring tricks! How time flies, to be sure!"

He gave a little sigh, then pursed up his lips.

"No!" he said to himself, shaking his head, "it's nothing to do with you. You've retired from business. Still, there will be no harm in getting full particulars from Freddie. From what I gathered from the landlord, I can't help thinking that this Scarsdale's motive was weak. But there I go again! My old, unfortunate habit, jumping at conclusions without waiting for the facts. It's a merciful thing that I retired when I did!"

He shook his head again.

"Dear me! And the poor girl—that's so pathetic!"

Then the kindly face brightened up.

"Ah, here comes Freddie! What a strapping young fellow he is!"

And P.C. Wilton Z. 105, was a fine specimen of humanity.

The bicycle having been left in the care of the ostler at the inn, the young constable and the veteran detective left the village for a quiet walk and talk.

"And now, Freddie," said the little man, after much conversation on homely and unprofessional matters. "Tell me about this burglary at the Woodlands!"

Wilton had been present when Alec Scarsdale had been charged at the police-station in the early hours of that morning. He gave a very complete account. Crump listened attentively.

"On that evidence," he said, "unless something fresh is brought to light between now and his trial, he is bound to be convicted. It is terribly—very terribly—circumstantial. In the eyes of a jury the weakness of motive will count for nothing in the face of such evidence. At the same time it is quite possible that he may be innocent."

Wilton looked at him with a little surprise.

"But you think he is guilty, don't you? No one doubts it at the station except Tom Jackson. It turns out he was in Mansfield's Bank as an office-boy before he entered the force, and saw a good bit of Mr. Scarsdale."

"And his reasons for believing in Scarsdale?"

"He showed Jackson a lot of kindness!"

"Then I respect Jackson very much for sticking up for him," said Crump, then, after a pause, "Do you know anything about this Seaton Revelle?"

"No. Only that he is a friend of the Mansfields. Why?"

"Well, my dear lad, if Scarsdale did not steal the diamonds and money, Revelle did. It is one or the other; but all the evidence is dead against Scarsdale. The real key to the whole matter is the unknown accomplice. You see, Scarsdale, according to you, tells precisely the same story as Revelle. He says that he was aroused by sounds, and went downstairs to see what was happening. But what will go against him are the facts that he was fully dressed; the drug was found upon him, and he mixed Mr. Mansfield's whisky; but for these facts it seems to me his story would have been quite as credible as Revelle's!"

"Yes," said Wilton, in spite of his infinite respect for Crump a little dubiously. "If you had the case in hand, what would you do?"

Crump's eyes twinkled a little.

"I should strain every nerve to collar the unknown gentleman, and I should make very searching inquiries into Mr. Revelle's past history. And depend upon it, all this is being done. The case is in far younger and abler hands than mine."

He paused for a moment.

"My day is over, and it's a good thing. But I am growing very interested in this case. I shall certainly go up to London for the trial."

It was a momentous decision!

CHAPTER VII.

A Friend in Need.

It was broad daylight when, after having preferred the charge against Alec Scarsdale at the police-station, the banker and Seaton Revelle reached the Woodlands. Mr. Mansfield's first thought was of his daughter. Leaving Revelle, who retired to his room, he hurried into the study to find Esther still lying on the couch, beside her a grey-haired old lady, Mrs. Tilley, the housekeeper, and once her nurse—a dear, large-hearted old creature who worshipped the very ground that Esther trod upon.

"There, there, missie," she was saying as the door opened, "you mustn't grieve like this. P'raps it will prove to be all a mistake. There, there, you mustn't sob so! Come, missie, you'll catch your death of cold; let me take you back to your room."

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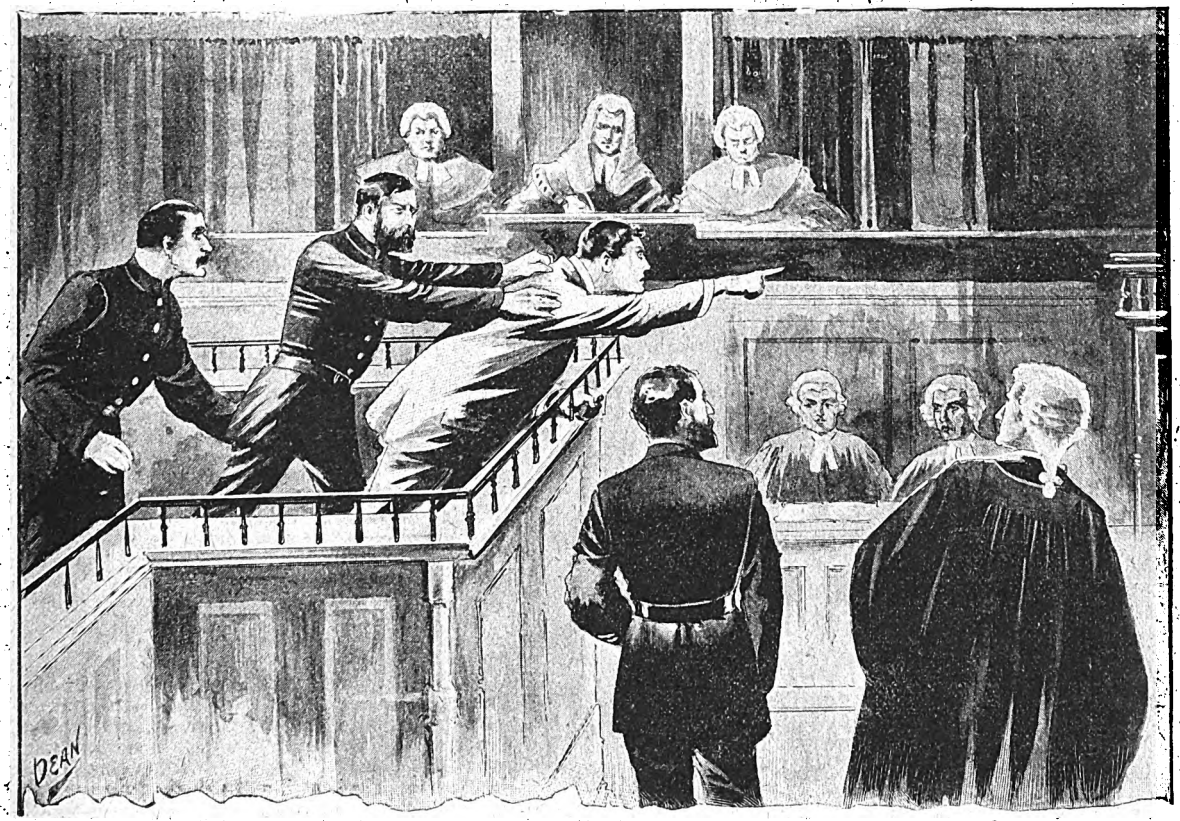
But the sobbing, instead of ceasing, became more piteous. And every sob only added fresh fuel to the burning hate that John Mansfield felt against the man whom he looked upon as the cause of all this misery. He was not an unkind man. Had there been any possibility of escaping from the conclusion that Alec Scarsdale was a thief and an unutterable scoundrel, he would have been only too thankful. But there was no getting away from the overwhelming evidence, and there is no hatred so great or so merciless, as that of a man who believes that he has been deceived. The sight of his daughter's grief maddened him.

"Esther," he whispered, as he knelt beside her, "what can I say to you, my darling? You must try to forget this," the word almost choked him, "this man! Let us be thankful

"I love him," she cried, passionately. "I trust him; why should he have done this? Was he starving—was he in need of money? You have known him for years. If he had been dishonest, there were a hundred opportunities"—her love had given her strength to reason. "Oh, father, can't you see that it is all a horrible mistake?"

As the hot words poured out, the door quietly opened, and Seaton Revelle stood on the threshold. As Esther's eyes fell upon the handsome, smooth face, the lightning thought flashed through her brain that it was this man, and this man alone, on whose word everything depended.

Was it possible—she took a backward step—that this man was lying to save himself? Her brain was working feverishly in a straining endeavour to find the truth. Either Alec was



"There"—and it was more a shriek than a cry—"there—that man, that man!"

that we have discovered his villainy now, though God knows, it has been a cruel and terrible shock. Esther, my darling, you must try to forget."

Raising her white, tear-stained face, she glanced up at him.

"Oh, father, don't speak like that. I'm sure it's all a horrible mistake. It must be. It cannot be true. You cannot believe that Alec could do such a thing. Father, tell me that you do not believe him guilty."

Mr. Mansfield honestly wished he could. He would have given half his possessions to have been able to say the words. He turned aside his face, that he might not see his daughter's pleading glance.

"No, I cannot, Esther, in the face of the evidence, the incontestable proofs, it is impossible. For your sake, for my own, I wish I could; but I cannot—I cannot!"

A sudden change had come over Esther. She sprang to her feet, her eyes blazing, her frame quivering with emotion

a criminal, and the man who now faced her, a deep look of concern on his features, had told the truth, or Alec was innocent, and his accuser an unutterable scoundrel. She believed, instinct told her that Alec was innocent, and yet she scarcely believed it possible that a man could be so vile as, without apparent reason, to swear away another's character and freedom. With a quick movement she pressed her hands to her forehead. She was so innocent herself; knew so little of the villainy of the seamy side of the world, that she inwardly reproached herself for such a thought. No, the man must have spoken what he thought to be the truth, and yet——

"Mr. Revelle"—she had not taken her burning eyes from off his face, but he did not flinch—"it cannot possibly be true! Remember what is at stake. A man's freedom, his character, perhaps, perhaps his life. An accusation like this is enough to break body and soul"—carried away by emotion, she seemed

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scarcely conscious of what she was saying—"say that you have made a mistake before it is too late, before his life is wrecked, and—and mine!"

There was a terrible intensity about her incoherent appeal. Seaton Revelle had momentarily dropped his eyes. He was tugging almost nervously at his moustache. Cool, hard as he was, he found it a trying ordeal. He wished he had stayed in his room.

It was harder to lie to this white-faced girl, with staring eyes that seemed to look into his very soul, than to those others. But the thrill of conscience was only momentary. He raised his eyes and met hers.

"Miss Mansfield," he said, in a low voice, "do you think I should have done what I have done unless I had been quite certain? Do you think I could be so vile as to allow an innocent man to be unjustly accused? I caught him in the act! Heaven knows, I am sorry enough for my share in this night's work. I wish it had fallen to someone else. I wish I had been a thousand miles away!"

He spoke as though it pained him to utter the words, and he knew well how to ring the changes of his well-tuned voice. A low moan escaped Esther's lips. She staggered to where Mrs. Tilley stood.

"Take me away," she murmured. "Take me away." And the old housekeeper, placing an arm round her, led her with motherly tenderness towards the door. As they passed him, Seaton Revelle held out his hand.

"Miss Mansfield, I cannot express my grief for what has happened. Will you forgive me for my unfortunate share in the matter?"

Their eyes met. There was something in his look that made her turn from him with a shudder.

"Don't speak to me," she whispered, in her grief scarcely knowing what she said. "Don't—don't touch me!"

Revelle turned white, and bit his lips. Had she some shadowy suspicion of the truth, or was it merely the action of a girl whose mind was partially unhinged by sorrow? A hand was laid on his shoulder.

"You must forgive her, Revelle," said John Mansfield, in a broken voice; "she doesn't mean what she says, my poor Esther, she has suffered terribly—if only I had the power to console her, comfort her. It has been a dark night for us all!"

When Seaton Revelle again reached his bedroom, he drew up the blind, and, having lit a cigarette, flung himself into an easy-chair.

"Not worth while going to bed," he muttered, glancing at the clock; "breakfast will be ready in a couple of hours; besides, I've one or two little matters to think over. So far, so good. It looked pretty nasty at one time, but chance did more for us than calculation. Only one little flaw, Scarsdale saw Benny; but my description will have more value than his, and—well, Benny will have to lie low for a little while. As to the pretty Esther, I fancy her confidence will be shaken when it comes to the trial; she doesn't know the nature of the evidence against her *fiancé* at present. It will pan out all right. Time, they say, is a great healer, and, well—a little patience should bring its own reward. By Jove, though, when she gave me that look, she seemed to stare straight into my soul!"

He laughed—rather uneasily, then flung his half-smoked cigarette into the grate.

"Women," he muttered irritably, "are more bother than they are worth. They always constitute an unknown element in the game. Every man is bound to be made a fool of, once in his life, by some woman or other"—he gave a smile that revealed his white, even teeth—"well, I've been salted. I wonder what's become of her?"

He leant back in his chair and stared out at the blue sky.

"Yes, I wonder what's become of her?"

The same sun that shone through the window upon Seaton Revelle, piercing through the narrow slit of the police-station cell, fell upon Alec Scarsdale pacing monotonously to and fro.

Now and again the trap in the door was drawn back, and a policeman stared in. But Scarsdale was so absorbed in his thoughts, that he scarcely heard the sound. Esther had told him she believed him innocent, but would her faith stand the tests that awaited her? His thoughts were more collected now; he was able to reason more clearly, and the more he thought of the damning evidence against him, the more hopeless the case seemed. If only he could see Esther, or even send her a message!

"Mr. Scarsdale!"

He started, and looked up as his name, softly whispered, came through the open trap.

"Mr. Scarsdale, for Heaven's sake don't make a noise, but it's me, Jackson. I've only just come in off my beat, and heard the news. I can't, I won't believe it true!"

A dazed look passed over Scarsdale's face. Springing up, he hurried across the cell to the door, and stared through at the honest face on the far side.

"You, Jackson! Why, I thought you were in London."

"Not so loud, Mr. Scarsdale. No; you see, Warham is in the area of the Metropolitan police, and I was drafted down here some weeks ago. When I heard it was you who had been arrested for the burglary up at the House, I couldn't believe my own ears—you, who were so good to me when I was a lad at the bank, who helped me when the poor mother lay dying; you, who helped me when I was tempted, and saved me from myself! I said to myself it couldn't be true. Quick, there's not a moment to spare, the sergeant will be here in a second. Can I do anything for you?"

It seemed almost as if Scarsdale's prayer had been heard.

"Have you a slip of paper and a pencil?" he whispered quickly. "Will you take a message for me?"

The young constable whipped out his pocket-book, tore out a sheet of paper, and, wrapping it round a pencil, passed it through the grating.

"Esther," wrote Scarsdale, "Heaven knows how it will all end, but before God, I am innocent—Alec."

"Jackson, can you get that to Miss Mansfield?"

"Trust me. Look out, here's the sergeant!"

Jackson lowered the trap, and, concealing the slip of paper in his tunic, sprang back just as the door at the end of the passage was flung open, and the station sergeant appeared.

"What are you doing here, Jackson?" asked the sergeant abruptly.

"Just having a look at him," was the answer; and the sergeant, thinking him a zealous young member of the force, who wished to make himself acquainted with a suspected criminal for professional purposes, was satisfied.

Scarsdale gave a deep sigh of relief. Mentally tortured as he was, the thought that Esther would get his message, lightened the heaviness of his heart. He thanked Heaven for the coincidence that had brought Tom Jackson across his path. He had little dreamed when, a few years back, he had done a kindness to a young lad in the bank, how and when that kindness would be repaid.

* * * * *

"Beg pardon, miss, but perhaps you don't remember me?"

It was late afternoon. Scarsdale had been brought up before the magistrates, and had been formally sentenced to stand his trial at the Central Criminal Court. It was Mrs. Tilley, the old housekeeper, who had broken the news to Esther. "It was piteous to see her," the old lady had said, in the servants' hall. "If only she could have cried! But she stood there, white and silent, and the look in her dark eyes made my heart fairly bleed."

The news, though not unexpected, had numbed Esther.

For a long while she had sat alone in her room. Then an over-mastering longing had come over her. If she could only

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see him! She knew nothing of police routine. If she pleaded, told them who she was, surely they would let her see him? It was late afternoon when, her features thickly veiled, she had left the house. Absorbed in her thoughts, she had scarcely noticed the approach of the stalwart, neatly-dressed young man, who had stopped and addressed her. She looked at him wonderingly.

"No—I don't remember you!"

"I used to be in your father's bank, Miss, and I used to see you come in there. After that I gave up office work and joined the police."

"The police—have you come from the station? Can you tell me——"

Tom Jackson did not wait for more words. He gave her the scrap of paper with Scarsdale's words pencilled upon it. With trembling hands Esther unrolled it. A stifled sob escaped her as she read the message; then, with a feverish movement, she pressed it to her burning lips.

"Oh, I do believe him," she whispered half aloud, "oh, I do believe him. I must see him! Tell me, can I see him?"

Jackson shook his head.

"I'm afraid not, miss, unless you've an order signed by the magistrates, and it's not an easy thing to get. But if you'd like to write something down on a slip of paper, maybe I could manage to give it him."

"Yes, I will do that," said Esther quickly. Then, after a moment's pause, during which she suffered her eyes to rest on Jackson's honest face, "You—you—believe in him?"

Tom Jackson coughed, and drew the back of his hand sharply across his eyes.

"Miss," he said in a low voice, "when I was a youngster in the bank, I was once badly tempted. My mother was lying ill, nearly dying; my father—it's not for me to speak against him now—never did any work, and had been in drink for three weeks. I'd a little brother and sister, and the wages I was earning, try hard as I would, didn't go far enough, and the doctor said if my mother was to get well she must have good and nourishing food. I hadn't got the money, but—but there was money at the bank"—he paused for a moment, and then dropped his voice to a whisper—"but for Mr. Scarsdale I should have been a thief. I'd got the cash-box in my hand when he came into the room. No, he didn't send for the police, but he took me into his private office, and, to my dying day, I shan't forget what he said to me. I didn't attempt to excuse myself; I told him all. He made me promise that I'd fight against temptation in the future. That evening, when I got home"—there was a strange huskiness in the young constable's voice—"there was a hamper of good things for my mother, and a letter for me, inside it a five-pound note. Do you think, miss, after that, I dare believe him guilty?"

Esther, her heart too full for words, held out her hand. Tom Jackson took it; then, clumsily, but with a simple chivalry almost touching to behold, bent down and kissed it.

"Miss," he said, "if I can do anything for him, you can trust me; I've got a debt to wipe off!"

It is strange how barriers of reserve, of social difference, are swept away by a common feeling. The rich banker's daughter did not see before her a humble constable of the Metropolitan police, but a new-found friend.

Jackson had again brought out his note-book and pencil.

"Mr. Scarsdale shall get it this evening," he said, handing them to her. "Here, miss, there's no one about, just make a desk out of my shoulders!"

And, bending down, he presented a broad pair of shoulders for Esther to write upon.

Anyone, not knowing the circumstances, and coming along the road, might have smiled at the scene. Comedy and pathos are often strangely intermingled.

"Alec," wrote Esther, "whatever happens, I shall always believe in you. Oh, my love, if I could only see you. But hope, hope! I am going to try to solve this mystery. I have a horrible suspicion someone is working against you, wishes to ruin you! I have found a friend—the bearer of this—who I feel will help me. Once more, Alec, nothing shall shake my love and my belief. We must hope.—Esther."

That evening, Jackson managed to slip the note through the trap in the cell door. When Scarsdale had read it by the light of the guarded gas-jet, he feverishly pressed it to his lips.

It was like a draught of wine to him.

Benny

CHAPTER VIII.

Sentenced. A Face in the Crowd.

The Warham robbery, the astounding facts connected with it as chronicled in the various papers, had caused a profound sensation, and had aroused the greatest excitement, not only in London, where the name of John Mansfield, the banker, was well-known, but throughout England.

Alec Scarsdale's name was on everybody's lips. The great British public had anticipated judge and jury, and had already condemned him. The array of facts against him was too formidable, too convincing, to admit of a doubt. That he had been in Mr. Mansfield's employ for several years, that he had been admitted into his complete confidence, only made him appear the more infamous. Even what should have been treated as sacred was ruthlessly dragged into the glaring light of publicity—his engagement to Esther Mansfield. One paper alluded to him as the man who, on one day, made love to the daughter, and, on the next, robbed the father.

The greatest curiosity prevailed as to the whereabouts of the missing man, the mysterious confederate who had escaped with the proceeds of the robbery, roughly estimated at ten thousand pounds. In spite of all efforts and rumours of clues, he was still untraced. A reward had been offered, and a description had been outside sundry police-stations, but the description was not that given by Scarsdale, but by Seaton Revelle, and his description was exactly the reverse of that dapper little gentleman yclept Benny Beard.

The Old Bailey was crowded to overflowing. Men and women had fought and struggled in their eagerness to get a place in the court. Heads were craned forward, and every eye was fastened on the empty dock. Then the low buzz of many voices broke into a loud murmur that all the cries of "Silence in Court!" could not still, as Scarsdale, two stalwart warders with him, passed up from the underground passage into the dock.

He was as white as a ghost, and looked frightfully haggard.

He heard the murmur and involuntarily glanced round, only to behold a sea of faces bent upon him unpityingly, eyes that glared at him as at some savage caged animal. He turned away again. His head sank forward, crushed down by the degradation, the horrible humiliation of it all. Then, with an effort, meaning to play the man, he flung it back almost defiantly.

"One look at him," said a man at the back of the gallery to his neighbour, a slim, dapper little person, who seemed content with his place in the background, "one look at him is enough to tell you whether he's guilty or not."

"Not a doubt about it," was the answer, "and, my eye! won't he get it hot when it comes to the sentence. Bless me if he hasn't pleaded 'not guilty'! Far better throw himself on the mercy of the court."

And the dapper little man scratched his clean-shaven chin.

Not very far away, jammed in tightly, was another little man, of homely and insignificant appearance. He might have been accommodated with a seat in the body of the court, being a late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, but Crump was essentially retiring. He preferred the obscurity of the gallery.

Had he been in a mood to reflect, the dingy, badly ventilated court might have recalled many sensational scenes in which he had played brilliant parts, but his whole attention was riveted on the prisoner.

When asked the question, Scarsdale pulled himself together and, in a low voice, said "Not guilty, my lord!"

Then the trial proceeded. The murmuring of voices gave way to a deep silence, as everyone followed the evidence with breathless interest—complete, damning evidence, that the counsel for the defence with all his cleverness could not shake.

But there was another murmur when Seaton Revelle, no emotion on his smooth, calm face, immaculately dressed, stepped into the witness-box. It was a murmur of admiration for the man who had caught the felon who now stood in the dock.

Scarsdale clenched his teeth as he glibly told his lying tale. Once their eyes met, and Seaton Revelle's lips curled with a contemptuous, scornful smile. In vain the counsel for the defence cross-questioned him; Seaton Revelle gave his answers with a cool deliberation, and never once contradicted himself.

It was all so much agony to Scarsdale to listen to the scoundrel who was lying away his freedom. But most of those in court saw in the quivering of lip and nostril the terror of the guilty man, who saw the proofs of his crime gathering round him, and closing up the crevices of escape.

"You have known the prisoner for some time, Mr. Revelle," said the counsel for the defence, "has there ever been any personal difference between you?"

Seaton Revelle looked coolly across the court at Scarsdale.

"I looked upon Alec Scarsdale"—he was speaking very deliberately—"as a personal friend, until——"

"Until? Go on, please, Mr. Revelle," said the counsel, for the witness had hesitated.

"Until I caught him in the act of plundering the safe."

A moment later, the unexpected happened in the shape of one of those scenes described in newspapers as "a sensation in court."

Scarsdale, already over-wrought and well-nigh driven mad, had lost all control of himself. As Seaton Revelle stepped down from the witness-box, he leant across the dock.

"You've lied," he cried. "Lied—lied—lied! Every word you've uttered has been a hellish lie!"

The outburst was so sudden, so abrupt, that the whole court was taken by surprise. Even Seaton Revelle for a moment seemed to lose his wonderful self-possession. A grey shadow crossed his features, and he took a step backward, as if he feared the prisoner would vault over the dock and fling himself upon him.

But the warders on either side of him had dragged Scarsdale back.

"Silence, prisoner!" cried the judge sternly. "Do you think to improve your case by such unseemly conduct?"

It was some time before order was again restored. And one evening paper, in a highly-coloured description of the affair, stated that so great was the feeling against the prisoner that, under any conditions save those of a well-regulated English court of law, he would have been in danger of being lynched.

Seaton Revelle did not leave, but, taking a seat in court, waited for the result of the trial. A slight smile, concealed by his moustache, played about the corners of his mouth as he listened to the powerful speech of the counsel for the prosecution. Every word he uttered seemed to drive a nail into the coffin of Scarsdale's freedom.

It was only when the judge had summed up, and the jury had retired to consider the verdict, that Scarsdale was allowed to sit down. He sank down like one in a dream, and covered his face with his hand.

Was it possible that he was a criminal in the dock? Even now, he half-expected to awake to find it all a horrible dream.

A low buzz of voices pervaded the court. The counsel for the prosecution was carrying on an amiable conversation with the counsel for the defence.

The public were discussing with bated breath, not the verdict—there could be no doubt about that—but the sentence.

Scarcely ten minutes had elapsed before the jurymen filed back into the box. One of the warders nudged Scarsdale in the back. He rose mechanically to his feet. He was white, frightfully white, but he had regained his self-control. He did not flinch when the foreman of the jury, in answer to the usual question, uttered the one word, "Guilty!"

Then the judge asked him if he had anything to say why sentence should not be passed. There was a pause, and a breathless silence. Every eye was fastened upon him, as, with a quick movement, he clutched at his collar as though it choked him. But when he spoke, his voice was clear, though low, and his words reached to the back of the court—to the clean-shaven man who sat there, and who shivered as he listened.

"Only this, my lord, I am innocent. Sooner or later, I believe the truth will come to light, and you will find that you have condemned an innocent man. Sooner or later, I believe that those who have tried to ruin me will be brought to justice." He paused for a moment, and glanced to where Seaton Revelle was seated. He did not meet that glance, but seemed engrossed in studying the signet ring on his little finger. "Before God I protest my innocence!"

"They all of 'em say that," whispered the man at the back of the gallery, "and I ought to know, seein' that I've hardly missed a trial for the last fifteen years."

"Hah!" said the clean-shaven man, "the judge's going to pass sentence. Look at his hatchet face. He's got a 'lifer' expression upon it."

"Alexander Scarsdale," said Justice Hoskins, in a judicial, almost expressionless voice, "after a fair and impartial trial you have been found guilty by a jury of your fellow-countrymen, and I entirely concur with the finding. Your previous good character, the fact that you are a man of education and intellect, only enhances the heinousness of your offence. Society must be protected against such men as you. The man who has had no education, who has been brought up among evil associates and surroundings, has at least some excuse. You have none. To the crime of robbery you have added the crime of ingratitude. Nor was it a crime of impulse, but rather deliberation. In passing sentence, I should not be fulfilling my duty as judge if I did not take these matters into consideration."

He paused for a moment. The silence was intense. One might have heard a pin drop. Seaton Revelle was nervously twirling round his ring. The prisoner had gripped the ledge before him. The warders had fastened their eyes on him. Prisoners had fainted before now when sentence is passed.

"Alexander Scarsdale, the sentence of this court is that you be sent to penal servitude for sixteen years!"

There was a burst of applause from the crowded court. Scarsdale staggered, swayed, and then, turning round, faced the public. Again he beheld the sea of pitiless faces.

Once sentence is passed, it is the custom of the warders in charge to take the prisoner out of the dock at once, in order to prevent the possibility of a scene.

But the men on either side of him were too late. For Scarsdale, staring wildly into the confused sea of swaying faces, had seen, away up in the gallery, but standing out with a vivid clearness, a face that had haunted him day and night—the face of the man he had seen that fatal night, standing beside the open safe.

"There"—and it was more of a shriek than a cry—"there—that man, that man!"

No one was looking at Seaton Revelle, or it would have been noticed that his face was as livid as the prisoner's.

"Let him speak; let him prove my innocence!" cried Scarsdale. He pointed a quivering finger up at the gallery.

And almost simultaneously with his action Crump turned his head sharply round!

(To be continued.)

(The incidents depicted in the little leaflets and on our covers of this and last week will be dealt with later.)

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By Sheer Bluff.

Telling of an Ingenious Trick which Exposed a False Lover.

"You have just told me, Miss Winston, that you love me."

"I have—and it is true."

"And yet you say in the same breath that you can never be my wife?"

"Yes—and that is true also."

"But *why* will you not marry me, Flo?"

"Because I cannot. I have given my word to another."

Fred Denton threw the end of his cigar into the water with a gesture of disgust, and sat erect. Then he whistled long and softly. He and Flora Winston were cosily ensconced in a punt, hidden from vulgar curiosity behind a drooping screen of willow boughs.

It was the last day of a pleasant summer holiday, and to-morrow both were returning to town. They had passed three happy weeks in the enjoyment of each other's company. Flora—on the eve of marrying a crabbed old millionaire whom she detested—had been bent upon enjoying to the full her brief remnant of liberty. To Fred Denton, the artist, she had at first seemed a gay and attractive companion. Later, he had found her fascinating and irresistible.

Thus it came to pass that three weeks of sketching and boating in company culminated in Denton's proposal, and in his sudden realisation that the girl he loved was not for him. He sat moodily twirling the end of his dark moustache, with a slight frown on his forehead. He was unable to grasp the full significance of what his companion had just told him.

"I ought never to—to have let you say it," faltered the girl, as she saw her lover's perplexity. "But then—I did not know that you really *loved* me, you see. I thought that we—that we were only just amusing one another—perhaps."

Denton did not speak for a moment. Then he asked savagely:

"Who is the beast?"

"Mr. Quartz, the millionaire."

"But—you don't mean to tell me that you love *that* animal?"

"Oh—no, no!" cried Flora, smiling in spite of herself. "Surely you don't think me capable of that folly, Fred?"

"Well then, it's the money," said Denton, decisively, ignoring the question.

"No, Fred—it's *not* the money. Why do you persist in thinking me so mercenary?"

"Well then, if you don't love old Quartz, and if you don't want his money, why the—I mean, why on earth have you promised to marry him?"

"Oh, Fred—it was all my mother's fault."

"You mean?"

"That mother was so set upon getting me a rich man for a husband. She said it would be the best possible thing for me, because then I should get into all the smartest circles, you know."

"Well?"

"And then Mr. Quartz turned up. I know he thought me pretty, because he said—he said something. It was not very nice, but it meant that he thought me pretty. Then he asked me to marry him, and I promised."

"But *why?*" Denton almost shouted. "You are of age; there was no earthly reason why you should marry a man for whom you had no love, just to please your mother."

"Well—you see—there was no one else, and I knew mother would be awfully pleased, and—and—oh Fred, you don't know how that man bothered me!"

Denton muttered something under his breath. Then he said:

"But I don't see why all this should make you persist in marrying a man you don't love."

"Can't you understand, Fred? I did not love *anyone* when I promised to marry Mr. Quartz. So I thought that he might as well have me as anybody else. He seemed fond of me, you know. Besides, I knew how much it would please mother."

"Yes, but it seems to me that matters have changed since then. You love me—you have just said so. Why don't you throw over that ass Quartz, and marry me?"

"But I have pledged my word, Fred. You would not have me go back on that—would you?"

Denton bit his lip. He had not thought of this difficulty. He sat for a long time in silence, his brow knitted in a perplexed frown. At last something seemed to occur to him, for his face grew a little clearer.

"But supposing Quartz threw *you* over?" he asked.

"Oh!" cried the girl, catching her breath; "I *wish* he would. But I dare not hope for such good fortune. Mr. Quartz seems to have taken a real fancy to me, and he thinks that I should make him such a capital wife. 'Toothsome and tractable'—I heard him say *that* to mother the other day. And—and he laughed—horribly."

Denton seemed less affected by this intelligence than might have been expected. He took the girl's hands in his, and looked into her deep blue eyes. She returned his gaze with trustful confidence.

"Flo—you do love me, don't you?" asked Denton, earnestly.

"Why of course I do, Fred. I have told you so several times already."

"Then can you trust me? I mean—will you do what I tell you?"

"I trust you with my whole heart, Fred," answered the girl. "I don't think I should care for you a bit, otherwise. Yes, I will do whatever you wish, for I know that you would not make me do anything mean or dishonourable."

Denton snatched a kiss.

"Then I think I can promise that you will be a free woman within the week," he cried, triumphantly.

"Oh Fred!" exclaimed the girl, and her face spoke the thoughts that she could not frame in words.

"Yes, Flo," pursued Denton. "I have a little plan in my head which I think will prove effectual. From what you have told me, I believe that old money-bag only loves you because you have a pretty face. If you were old and ugly, I don't believe he'd care for you any more than—than he would for that cow in the meadow yonder."

"Oh, Fred—how horrid!" cried the girl, with a look of alarm.

Denton put his arm round her waist and drew her closer to him.

"Do not be afraid, dearest," he said; "I'm going to prove whether Quartz really does love you or not. If he does not love you for something more than your face, what I am going to do will make him throw you over."

And then Denton's voice sunk to a whisper as he told her his plan. When he finished speaking, Flora clapped her hands delightedly.

"I believe all that you have said is quite true, Fred," she cried; "and I think your plan will work beautifully—I am

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sure it will. I will make it. Yes—you *may* have another kiss, you dear boy, for being so clever!"

* * * * *

Two days later, Flora Winstone sat alone in the drawing-room of her mother's house in town. She held a note, inscribed in a large, ill-controlled hand. It was from her *fiancé*, the opulent Mr. Quartz. In it—after many endearing phrases, which Flora read with a disdainful curl of her pretty lips—he asked for a private interview. He declared that he had scarcely known how to pass the time during her absence from town. He protested that he wanted to see his "little ducksie" again so badly, and that he trusted the day was not now far distant when he should fold her in his arms and call her his wife. Indeed, he now wished her to name the actual day for the wedding. Would she be at home on the following afternoon, and would she arrange to see him privately?

Thus it came to pass that Flora sat waiting the coming of her lover. She was dressed in the daintiest of tea gowns, and looked as charming and fresh as a rose. But—and oh the pity of it!—across her pretty face ran a terrible scar. It stretched from her white forehead, blackened her eye, and passed across her right cheek to the corner of her mouth. Two days ago, when Fred Denton had kissed her, she had been as lovely as heart could wish. Now—with that frightful livid scar distorting her features—her appearance was actually repellent. Yet she did not seem to be in pain, for her manner was perfectly controlled and easy. Indeed—and this was a most remarkable fact—the appearance of the scar was such that an observer would have sworn that it was several weeks old.

When Mr. Quartz was announced, Flora rose from her seat and came forward smiling. The amorous millionaire advanced with open arms.

"My darling Flora!" he exclaimed, rapturously; "how I have longed for this moment! Kiss me, my love."

Then, for the first time, he looked into her face, and saw the scar.

"My God!" he cried; "what in the name of all that is horrible have you been doing to yourself, Flora? What—what an awful accident!"

He stood with his arms hanging limply at his sides. He seemed to have lost all desire to embrace her. Indeed, he drew a little aside as one does who wishes to avoid some disgusting object. Flora was silent for a moment; then she spoke slowly.

"I did not realise that I was so much disfigured as all that."

"Not disfigured?" cried the millionaire, wildly; "why it is absolutely disgust—I mean, I am most awfully sorry for you, I'm sure."

Flora smiled sweetly.

"Oh don't trouble about me," she said; "It really doesn't hurt at all, you know. Besides, I've got your love to comfort me, you see."

Mr. Quartz took out his handkerchief and began to mop his brow, for he was perspiring profusely. He stole another glance at the girl's pitifully disfigured face. Then he asked:

"Can nothing be done to—I mean, is it not possible that the scar may become less conspicuous with time?"

"I cannot say," said Flora, guardedly; "but—if it's as bad as you say—I am afraid it is always likely to show."

Her remark practically ended the interview. Quartz made one or two attempts to converse on topics of a general nature but his mind was evidently engaged with thoughts very different from those he was trying to utter. At last he took his leave without even offering to kiss the woman for whom he had so lately professed deep affection.

* * * * *

As soon as the millionaire was out of the house, Flora ran to her bedroom. When she returned to the parlour, her face was as pretty and as kissable as ever. She had not passed more than an hour in solitude when Fred Denton was announced. As a matter of fact it was not his first call that afternoon. But his previous entry—and its object—had been only known to Flora's French maid, and Flora herself. Denton came into the room, and seated himself with deliberation.

"Well?" he asked.

"I think it will be quite right, dear," answered Flora.

"He did not jilt you on the spot, then?" asked Denton, a little disappointedly.

"Oh!—I don't think that even Mr. Quartz is vulgar enough for that," said Flora, goodnaturedly.

"He's vulgar enough for anything," cried Denton, irritably, "still, if he gives you up, I don't care what else he does—so there!"

"Have a little patience, Fred," said Flora, earnestly; "wait for a day or so, and I believe you will get me for your wife—thanks to your cleverness."

"Cleverness!" exclaimed Denton, raising his eyebrows; "why I racked my brains to discover a way out of the difficulty. I don't call that cleverness. Necessity is the mother of invention, you know."

"Oh, but it was clever, dear!" persisted Flora; "it was such an original idea to begin with, and then you painted the scar so awfully well. The success of the whole thing really depended on that, you know."

"Only we haven't succeeded yet," said Denton, gloomily.

"Don't worry, Fred dear," said Flora, encouragingly; "we shall succeed—I'm quite sure."

And Flora's prophecy came true. As Denton had supposed, Mr. Quartz merely wished to make Flora his wife, because she had a pretty face and a graceful figure. He had no appreciation for the deeper qualities of her nature. So the very first post the next morning, brought Flora a note in a well known handwriting. It ran:

> "MY DEAR MISS WINSTONE—I need hardly say how shocked and grieved I was at the terrible result of your accident. I had no idea that you had sustained such an injury until I saw you yesterday, and I was rather surprised that you considered it unnecessary to acquaint me with the facts of the matter at an earlier date. Under the circumstances, you will, I think, realise that it is impossible for our connection to continue on its present footing. I mean—you will of course consider our engagement a thing of the past. If, however, you still desire to consider the contract binding, I must ask you to communicate with my lawyer, to whom I have already written.
>
> "Believe me, my dear Miss Winstone,
>
> "Yours faithfully,
>
> "SILAS QUARTZ."

Flora read the letter with an amused smile on her face until she came to the last sentence. Then she stamped her little foot angrily:

"The horrid beast!" she exclaimed, as she tore the missive into tiny pieces; "Fred was right after all. He's vulgar enough for anything. He thinks that I want to get his money—that I shall sue him for breach of promise. Oh I *am* glad that I have escaped from his clutches. Fred is a dear, but Mr. Quartz is—oh, I don't know what to call him!"

An hour or two later Fred called in, and was overjoyed at the good news which awaited him.

"Flo, dear," he cried; "I must have one little, two little, three little, four little, five little, six little—kisses. And oh—I shall want a great many more than that, too!"

Percy Collins.

Merely a Detail.

HE (after an elopement): "You led me to infer that you would inherit twenty thousand pounds." SHE: "No, I didn't. I said my father was worth that much." HE: "Well, you never said a word about having fourteen brothers and sisters." SHE: "I didn't suppose you wanted to marry the whole family."

A Question of Laps.

A CORRESPONDENT asks: "Do you think it right for a girl to sit on a young man's lap even if she is engaged?" Now this is a ticklish question, and can be replied to in three different ways. "If it is our girl and our lap, yes; if it is another girl and our lap, yes; but if it is our girl and another fellow's lap, most certainly not."

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Love Bound in Leather.

A Pretty Tale of a Boot-maker's Assistant who Loved and Lost.

No wonder he looked a bit leathery; no wonder he tied his tie in a manner suggesting shoe-laces, and expressed his estimate of a fellow-man's character by the mysterious letters A, E or D.

He was "in the shoe business."

He always expressed it in that way as sounding somewhat better than the more vulgar acknowledgment, "I am an assistant in a shoe-shop."

But he was.

And his fingers had tied and untied more shoe-laces than even the manager of the establishment. But, although his eyes were a trifle weak, not to say pink and watery, his trouser-knees shiny, and though he possessed several other unpleasant drawbacks, his heart was a heart after all.

He never knew he had a heart until the day She came to get some slippers to wear at her own coming-out party on St. Valentine's Day. Mamma was with her—mamma, ponderous and imposing, but whose shoes he had fitted for years with all the patience imaginable. Said mamma that day as she swept into the big shop:

"Where is Mr. Jenkinson? I could never think of having shoes fitted by any other young person."

So when they called him—he was at the back of the shop explaining lucidly the intricacies of the day book to a lady from out of town, who was suspicious of fraud in the matter—he came at once.

"I remember—fives C, isn't it?" said he, bowing before her magnificence of furs and silks.

"Oh, but it isn't to-day, Mr. Jenkinson," said mamma, in a superior way. "It's twos, and the narrowest you have!"

And then, for the first time, he saw Her—or rather her foot; for, after all, it was her foot which stole his heart—healthy and tough in the matter of pretty feet, from having been in the business for years—and more.

I don't think he ever noticed her face—especially.

But that little foot!

Or rather those little feet, for he fitted them both. They were slender, arched in instep, curved like the most exquisite of shoemaker's lasts. Not a foot for an artist to admire—not in the least—but a foot to wear and dance in a number two shoe in a manner to win the heart of the most *blasé* shoeman.

"White satin, please; and quite jolly high heels!" said a small, imperious voice.

And such dreams of slippers, such suggestions of coquetry in the matter of heels, did the amiable Mr. Jenkinson procure from out mysterious green boxes!

No wonder She was satisfied.

"For I'm *never* going to wear white ones again, you understand, until I'm either married or dead," said the small, imperious voice, essaying a laugh.

"Horrors!" said mamma. "What a reckless way of talking you have learnt at school! I feel quite like finding fault. I do indeed!"

But She only laughed again, and skipped merrily out to be tucked up with rugs by a pompous footman.

After that, when that footman waited before the door of the shop, it was more often "twos, quite narrow," than "fives, broad."

Ah, that St. Valentine's Day!

And poor Mr. Jenkinson!

How could a little girl just from school, revelling in her first season, know that among her fifty-odd adorers there was one who never so much as dared raise his pink, watery eyes from her feet?

"She's got the daintiest foot in town, bless her!" Mr. Jenkinson would say to himself.

And he came to brood upon it. Once when she tried on walking boots, she kicked off some tiny shoes which she had most audaciously dared to wear during her trip into town in the smart brougham, and said:

"You need not send them home; they are so worn."

That night Mr. Jenkinson instituted a shrine. It consisted of a corner cabinet of walnut, which was adorned as to its exterior with a knitted mat and a china dog.

When he had hired his room, the landlady had casually remarked:

"It'll open. You can keep your medicines in it. I hope you'll put it to no worse use. My last lodger—him as we had an inquest on—used it for his whisky bottle; and always carried the key."

Was it the latter fact or the matter of the inquest which seemed to so envelop the genial lady in disgust? Mr. Jenkinson never even tried to solve the problem. But it came to pass that he gave her reasons after that night to suspect his own possession of a whisky bottle, for he afterwards carried the key even as the man associated with the paragraph in a daily paper in reference to an inquest.

But a whisky bottle?

Oh no!

At night when he unlocked the door of the little walnut cabinet, one might see something far more dangerous to the masculine heart.

Two tiny half-worn shoes—of bronze kid.

They were his valentine's.

That was all.

Yet many men have worshipped less. And if on the last great day ALL is made open and all secrets disclosed, what strange, not to say laughable, shrines of the bachelor heart will be among the exhibits! And She never knew. That fact imparted a strange melancholy to the affair, in Mr. Jenkinson's opinion. And how busy She kept him! Pink shoes, blue slippers, green satin and lemon satin, and such wicked, wicked rosettes and heels!

At last—for there is always that inevitable "at last" in affairs of the heart, even though it be not a shoeman's heart, there came to Mr. Jenkinson a blow—a bitter, bad blow. You would not think a pair of white satin high-heeled "number twos, narrow," could administer as severe a one. But so it was. Had she not said, "I will never wear another pair of white ones until I marry or die?" And she was very much alive. He could not wish her dead—ah no!—but it was very hard to bear. He leant quite over that little dear foot as he fitted the slippers of a bride upon it. She could not see his face as she said:

"Please see that they put *real* seed pearls on the tulle rosettes, for these are to wear with a wedding-gown."

But, at the last moment, Fifine, the little maid, said in horror, as she fitted them upon the bride's silken covered foot:

"But, madame!—but, miss!—there are really strange marks upon the satin! One might almost call them tears!"

"It's too late to do anything about it now!" said mamma, fussily. "But really it was very careless of Mr. Jenkinson! As a matter of fact, they *do* look like tears—I wonder——"

"And if they *were* tears," cried the little bride, "are not tears pearls? and I ordered them."

Poor Mr. Jenkinson!

Johanna Staats.

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A RUINED LIFE.

A Pathetic Story of Love, Faithlessness, and Tragedy.

MIGNONETTE grew in the little garden where Miselle sat at work; and she had plucked some of it and fastened it in her smooth, black hair. Somehow, having once been placed there, it seemed to have been planted and grown for no other purpose. Its very fragrance seemed a part of her. At least so Will Harrington thought as he stood looking at her.

"Mignonette," he said, stooping towards her; "Mignonette."

He would not have spoken so to one who would quite have understood him. But she, who had gathered all she knew at the humble school of Sheepdale, had never heard that mignonette means "little darling." It was no new thing for him to speak softly when he spoke to her either. She looked up not surprised or startled, and said:

"Yes, Mr. Harrington, I love mignonette."

Just then Will was inclined to forget everything but that she was pretty. He was himself a fashionable man, a scion of uppertendom. Until the summer he had never fancied that his heart could be won by any girl who had not style and family and a thorough acquaintance with all the requirements of good society. But here, in this long summer of rest and quiet he had fallen in love with a country girl, humble even amidst simple people in her position, for she was poor, and the grandchild of two old people, who could leave her nothing. This was the end of his resolve to escape for once from the routine of London and the Riviera.

To think of it seriously gave him much the same feeling that a bather experiences on his first plunge into cold water. Just at that moment, however, he did not endeavour to think. No one was in the garden save themselves and a great golden bee, hovering and humming above the flowers.

Miselle's face was so beautiful, and her hair so black, and her eyes like velvet also, set with diamonds, and the fragrance of the mignonette and the chirrup of insect, and song of bird, and faintly-tinkling of cow-bell, all sanctified the scene.

So Will Harrington drew Miselle towards him, and looked down into her eyes and said:

"Miselle, be my Mignonette?"

What he meant dawned upon her, and she blushed and trembled. Then he spoke more plainly.

"I love you, Miselle. Will you be my wife?" and she answered: "Yes."

Afterwards they sat just so for a long while. His arm about her waist, her work dropped in her lap under her small brown hands. So still that the golden bee lighted upon the mignonette in Miselle's hair for a moment, and sipped, and flew away, homeward this time, for the sun was setting.

And then a voice broke the charm, a harsh old voice, with a nasal twang.

"Miselle," it said, "yew come in tew tea, and Mr. Harrin'tun p'raps you'd better set down tew!"

But the gentleman addressed declined, and took his way homeward. Walking through the country ways, he thought. The thoughts were not pleasant.

"But I shall take Miselle away," he muttered. "These people will be nothing to us. We will travel a year or two. And she will acquire the necessary manners." And already he wished that there was not something to be thought of.

Happily, he did not think when with Miselle, and the weeks went by pleasantly; and when they parted, he put a ring upon her finger, and promised to come for her in the autumn.

They were to correspond, of course—and that was a pleasant thing to Miselle. And he left her with moist eyes, and carried a little bunch of mignonette.

The summer holidays were ended, and the fashionable world had come to the city again to keep its winter holiday, and Harrington found everything as of yore, and as many gay beauties ready to unite upon him. There was an old flirtation, too, which could not well be ended while the lady was so willing it should turn into something more, between Miss Dash, the heiress, and himself. And at first, Will did not mention Miselle to his friends, because there was time enough. And at last, because it was an awkward business, being put off so long. And Miselle wrote too many letters, and put them into coarse, yellow envelopes, and was not careful of her grammar. And she spoke far too much of those old grand-parents, who were Will's abomination. And amidst balls and suppers, and dinner parties, Miss Dash re-asserted her supremacy; until reproaches for negleeted answers came from Miselle and vexed her lover. Still he smoothed this over, and would, perhaps, have gone down to Sheepdale to keep his troth in the autumn, had not Miselle written him, in the fulness of her reconciliation, a loving letter, in which she spoke of the trials of her grand-parents, and of her joy in looking forward to the time when she could have a home to which to welcome them. Those old people, hard and coarse, and ignorant, whom he abhorred so!

Will never answered that letter. He burnt it, with a savage oath, and that night proposed to Miss Dash.

In a month they were married, and there was a fashionable wedding and a reception in the West-End; and diamonds and lace, and presents of gold and silver, and a tour, to end all with, and the two were one.

Before his honeymoon was over, Will discovered that he had never loved his wife, and that he adored Miselle.

A woman might carry such a secret to her grave with her. A man could not hide it. The bride who had been a belle and was not to bear such an insult calmly, discovered it in the briefest space of time. She intended to be a true wife, but she now took revenge in kind—to make her husband jealous was the task of her life. She flirted as she had never done in her girlish days. And as there is no danger of going too far with one who cannot be angling for a husband, a married woman can flirt when she pleases.

Will cared nothing for his wife, but he was proud and grew angry. He watched her with wild, jealous eyes, and the unhappy match ended in a quarrel, and in a separation.

And the world made more of the affair than it really was, and Will knew that he was the subject of much cruel talk, and shrank away from its gaze more ashamed of that which this darling, heiress-wife of his had brought upon him, than he ever could have been of Miselle's poor grammar, or of her old grand-parents.

He lived alone, and his wife led a gay life, apart from him, and was not too well spoken of, and in his solititude the man thought continually of Miselle, whom he had deserted. Thought how pure she would have been—how true to him, and how he would have loved her, until his life knew one great longing—a longing to be quite free to love Miselle again.

One day the wish was gratified. News came to him that his wife was dead.

It had been his fault that she had been wretched, and had made him so, but he never thought of that. He only felt that he was free. Miselle had not married, and now he would win her again. The world was nothing to him. He had fled from its tongue and its eyes long before, Miselle should do as she chose. There should be nothing which he would not give

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her leave to do. The old people might sit at her hearth and at her board, so that only that hearth and that board should be his also. And in holiday attire he went down to Sheepdale.

It was early summer. The day was like the one when he had told his love to Miselle. A bee or two, one might have been the very same, fluttered about the quiet garden again. Morning glories, purple and white, draped the porch. The seat where she sat at work was there beneath the grape vine, and there, too, were the perfumed borders of mignonette. The house was still, and all the windows were closed. It was often so of a summer afternoon. The man to whom this brought back those happy days so nearly, sat down to wait, and think what he should say to Miselle. Perhaps she did not know he had been married. If so, why tell her? Let the world he had thought so much of keep his unhappy secret. He would stay here in solitude with Miselle.

She would be proud at first—either cold or angry—but he would woo so humbly that she should forgive him in the end. As one condemned to death might pray for pity and mercy, he would beseech Miselle for pity and pardon. And then, yes, then she would let him draw her to his heart, and touch her brow with his lips, and call her his Mignonette, his little darling, once again.

And he had come to this thought, when the door opened, and he arose to greet Miselle.

But it was not Miselle, only her old grandmother, common of feature as ever, but with a strange, grief-stricken face. She did not see him, but went straight to the beds of mignonette, and began to pluck handfuls with her horny hands. Then he spoke to her. She looked up.

"I'm pickin' 'em for Miselle," she said, then gave a start. "I didn't know ye at first, Mr. Harrin'tun. I thought 'twas the minister. You're aged, and you're kind of grey. Yes, these are for Miselle. I used to be hard on her for likin' 'em, so I'm afraid. But I wanted her to be steady. Ef I'd knowed——"

Then came a sob. Harrington caught the old woman's arm.

"What is it? What has happened?"

"I reckoned you knew Miselle is dead. You see she kind o' faded when your letters stopped comin'. She wouldn't tell me. I supposed you quarrelled. She got tired of things, and sat a great deal by herself. Plenty wanted her—she was pretty. But she didn't seem to care. Six months ago she was took down. There was no hope then, and yesterday she died. Says she, 'Grannie, it's most over; when I'm gone, put his letters in the grave with me, and put mignonette in my hair. And tell him,' says she, 'for I think he'll come—that I always loved him.' P'raps you'd like to see her?"

Harrington followed her, and saw Miselle, dead, with his letters upon her bosom. Him the world never saw again. Until the old people died, he saw they wanted nothing, and while he lived, dwelt near Miselle's grave. Near it, also, his own has grown green for many years; and over both, creep soft beds of mignonette in the summer time, luring the golden bees from the gardens with its fragrance. K. D.

THE LAST WILL OF ABEL MITCHELL.

He Changed his Mind as to the Disposition of his Property.

ABEL MITCHELL called to his typine.

"You may go, Miss Morris," he said. He did not look up from the papers before him.

The young woman turned to the clock with a little start of surprise. It was only 4.30. But she quietly put on her hat and with a murmured good night, left the room.

Abel listened to the departing rustle of her skirts with a thoughtful expression. There was a sensible girl, a girl who never grated on his feelings, a girl who asked no useless questions. She had reached an age of discretion. If Jim was determined to marry a poor girl, why couldn't he have taken one like Emma Morris?

Abel opened a heavy envelope and drew forth a folded paper.

"Jim never was confidential with me," he grumbled. "Perhaps I didn't invite his confidence. I don't know. Now he has disobeyed my direct command. That can't be overlooked. When he told me about this girl, I said, wait. 'How long?' he asked. 'Until you reach years of discretion,' I cried, and turned away. Jim is twenty-four. Twenty-four. And I married at twenty-one. Yes, and ran away too. But it was different with me. My father had nothing to give me. I was quite independent. He was glad to have me shift for myself. Jim's father is a rich man. Jim's father has given him pounds where my father begrudged me pennies. Jim owes me filial obedience. He has disobeyed me to his bitter cost."

He unfolded the paper that he had taken from the envelope and ran his keen, grey eye down the closely written lines.

"He has given up his father for a pretty face," he murmured.

"Let him stand by the consequences. Who is she? What is she? It matters not. No doubt they trapped him into this marriage. 'A rich man's son,' they chuckled. But they'll find they're fooled. 'Father,' he said, 'I am to be married to-morrow night. Will you come with me to the wedding?' I turned on my heel. Then I looked back. 'You know the price you may pay?' I cried. 'Yes, father,' he said, with his head high up. 'I know. Good-bye, and God bless you.' He asked a blessing on me! Ha, ha, ha! That's too rich! But he'll get evil for good this time. I'll cut him off with a shilling. Let him sup on herbs for a while. That'll take the veneer from love's young dream. I'll draw up a new will at home to-night and have it witnessed before I sleep. And to let him know what his foolish fancy has cost him, I'll write him a letter—a letter he can show to his new relatives. That's the thing—the letter."

He bent down with his head upon his hand and his eyes upon the paper. A rustle of skirts in the doorway drew his attention. He did not look up. It was a way he had.

"Ah, Miss Morris," he said, "back again?" He had quite forgotten that he had sent her home.

The young girl in the doorway did not answer. Her bright eyes were fixed upon the old man. She expected him to look up. If he had done so he would have seen a charming vision. She was a very pretty girl—dainty and neat from the crown of her new hat to the tips of her new shoes. But he did not look up.

"Just in time," he added. "I want to dictate a letter before you go."

He paused, and the young girl, as if seized with a sudden

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fancy, quietly stepped into the room and seated herself at the typewriter.

"You have been with us so long, Miss Morris," the old man continued, "that we view you as a confidential agent. Besides, this will be public property very soon. I am going to write to my son. Last night he married an unknown girl against my wishes. I am going to tell him that I wash my hands of him and his; that to-night I change my will, cutting him off with a single shilling. Are you ready?"

The girl at the typewriter gave the instrument a preliminary click or two.

"James Mitchell," began the old man, "as you have seen fit to disobey me, to cast my fatherly wishes in my teeth, I desire you to know that I have no wish to hold further communication with you. While I cherish the impression that you were lured into this unhappy marriage—"

The typewriter stopped.

"Unhappy marriage," the old man repeated, and the clicking recommenced, "yet I cannot accept this as any excuse for your undutiful conduct. To-night I change my will, and you may rest assured that your name will be passed over with the smallest possible financial consideration. I prefer to have you understand this here and now. It will prevent you and your new friends from cherishing any false hopes. This is all I have to say, and no reply will be expected. Abel Mitchell."

The young girl drew the sheet from the machine and, bringing it forward, laid it on the old man's desk. Abel glanced it through.

"A beautiful copy," he said, and carefully folded it. Then he placed it in an envelope and dipped a pen in ink.

"I do not know his address," he said, and knit his brows.

The girl at the end of the desk extended her hand.

"If you have no objection," she quietly said, "I will deliver it to him in person."

The old man looked up at the fair face bending over him.

"Why, who are you?" he cried.

"I am Alice Mitchell," said the young girl.

"Mitchell!" repeated Abel dully. "M—my son's wife. And what—" But the ugly words would not come. He could not utter them in the light of those gentle eyes. "Will you be seated?" he lamely added.

"Thank you, no," said the girl. "I have but a few words to say; they will not detain you long." Abel's gaze dropped to the letter and the will, and a sarcastic smile twisted his mouth. "No, no," the girl quickly added. "I have not come to plead with you. You are quite wrong to imagine such a thing. And you were quite wrong, too, to insult me as you did in that letter."

He looked up again quickly. There were tears in the gentle eyes. And there was a glint of fire in them, too. "You insulted me, and you insulted my dear father. I have no mother." She paused a moment. "When you insinuated that my father was mercenary in this matter you did him a cruel wrong. He was bitterly opposed to our marrying without your consent. I disobeyed my father too. But it was not for your money. This letter will bring us no surprise."

The old man dropped his eyes beneath her reproachful gaze.

"Perhaps I was hasty," he slowly said, "but the provocation was great." Then he quickly added—"But knowing as you did, that I opposed the wedding, and your father opposed it too, why did you permit yourself to marry my boy?"

"I could make it clear to you, I think," said the girl gently, "if you loved your boy."

The old man trembled. If he loved his boy! All that was near and dear to him—all that was left to him of kith and kin. The babe that a dying wife had solemnly placed in his paternal arms. If he loved his boy! He drew a long breath and stared hard at the blank envelope on the desk before him.

"And now," said the young girl, "I only want to add that I think Jim was quite wrong in crossing your wishes. He might have waited. I wanted him to wait. But he is so proud, so self-willed. I am very sorry that I should be the means of separating you, and I—I am quite sure I am not worth the great sacrifice my dear—my husband—has made."

Abel was quite sure there were tears in her eyes again, but he did not look up.

"Where is Jim now?" he asked. Then he smiled grimly. "And why are you not enjoying your—your wedding tour?"

"There was a vacancy in the bank where my father is employed," said the girl, "and father secured it for Jim. His duties began to-day. Perhaps we will take our wedding journey later. We have to look out carefully for the main chance now, you know."

"And you didn't expect to fall back on my sovereigns?" said the old man.

"Not a penny of them," quickly replied the girl.

The old man fidgeted in his chair.

"And why not?" he asked.

"I think you understand," said the girl, and her gaze dropped to the letter on the desk.

"Does Jim know you are here?"

"No. At least he didn't know I was coming. Father will tell him to meet me at the corner at five o'clock. I must go."

"Wait," said the old man quickly. He looked at her searchingly. She met his gaze with a smile. Her mind was on Jim.

Abel deliberately put the will back in its envelope and the envelope in its pigeonhole. Then he picked up the letter in its unaddressed envelope, tore it into minute particles and tossed them into the waste-paper basket.

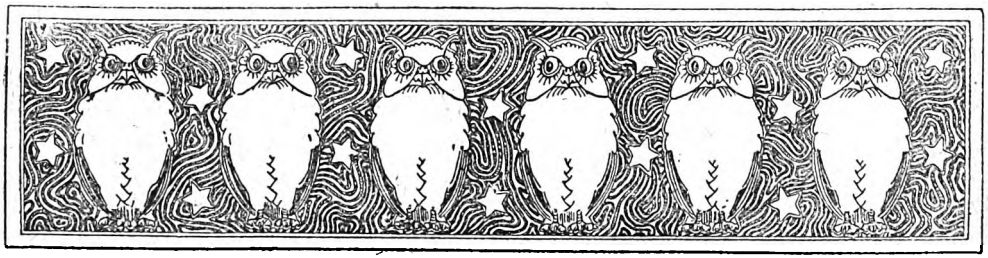
"I've changed my mind," he softly muttered.

He pulled down his desk-cover with a bang and reached for his hat.

"There," he said, "I'm ready." Then he added, "Will you give me your arm, my dear?" As they passed through the doorway he paused.

"I think, Alice," he said, "that you and I are going to be very good friends. And now we must hunt up Jim and take him home with us."

W. R. Rose.



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A Siren of the Sea.

The Love of a Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter.

"You see, one grows tired of life in the same grooves. A changeless day gets to be monontonous," explained Ned Holcomb, while idly throwing small pieces of rock into the channel, where it lay around Rock Point, and watching the play of sunshine and shadow over the water, as light clouds floated across the sky, driven slowly along by a south breeze, this calm April afternoon.

"Your queer, charming habitation, right out in the middle of the occan, is so inaccessible and remote, it seems like a different world, from ordinary humdrum city life. What an ideal retreat, and how you must enjoy getting beyond people's reach, and away from sin and wickedness, and all uncharitableness," continued Holcomb, leaning back against the abutment of the lighthouse, and tilting his hat over his eyes to shade them from the slanting rays of the sun, gilding the vast expanse of the ocean, shining white on the rails of the fishing fleet, skimming homeward, and outlining the rigging and smokestacks of an ocean liner steaming in across the bar.

Yvette smiled a little wistfully, for the solitude of their storm-beaten eyrie, so alluring to Ned, as a relief from the whiz of electric cars, the jangling noises of the city and perpetual contact with humanity, was sometimes oppressive to one so endowed with life and spirits as were the eternal wash and moan of the sea on the jagged rocks of the reef.

Then Yvette laughed, and, turning, looked with a frank gaiety at Ned Holcomb.

"How long do you think you could live here, away from your friends and business; with just the sea to sing to you, and only the stars at night to tell you tales? What would you do with yourself all day, and in the evening?"

"I never said I'd like to live here without—any—companionship," Ned said, returning the frank look of Yvette's deep, grey eyes, with one of open admiration, mingled with a friendliness Yvette had grown quite accustomed to by this time.

For, since the visit of the *Sea Gull*, three months ago, to Rock Point Lighthouse, Ned Holcomb had developed a great love for the sea apparently, and had fallen into the habit of sailing far out into the harbour to do deep sea fishing on the outer rocks. Going or returning, he would stop at the lighthouse, to bring, as he had promised, papers and periodicals to Ben Ker, and books, sweets, and flowers, to Yvette, whose glad pleasure, so unrestrainedly expressed, produced a curious impression on their giver.

Running slowly back to the city at nightfall or later, when the rising moon was casting mysterious witcheries over the rippling tide, Ned Holcomb would see Yvette's face, and the gleam of the Lighthouse beacon, not the electric lights of the distant city, and its church spires stretching up against the sky.

"There's a fascination about the sea," Yvette said, slowly, turning her gaze towards the far distant horizon, and ignoring her companion's last remark. "Even when in winter the wild storms dash the billows up against the Lighthouse, and the winds shriek and whistle, it gives one an exultant feeling to know that the old tower stands firm for all their fluster and rage, they can't prevail and tear it to pieces. Then in the summer, you can't think how lovely the sea is out here. How pleasantly it whispers, and how sweetly the little waves drone one to sleep! I've sometimes thought it dreary, but how I will miss the dear old Lighthouse! the never-ceasing sound of the waves, and the call of the sea-gulls, and the salt spray in the air. How I love it all!"

They were sitting on the rocks, watching the sunset on the ocean, and the tide being low, short waves were breaking at the foot of the reef, making a monotonous sound.

"What do you mean?" queried Ned Holcomb, a curious pang running through him. "You are not thinking of going away?"

Yvette nodded slowly.

Ned Holcomb turned quickly, then paused in what he was going to say, for what business was it of his why Yvette and the old man, her father, should give up their care of the Lighthouse and go—perhaps back to the little village on the Brittany coast, from which he had drifted long years ago?

Why should he care if this beautiful girl went away from this lonely dwelling-place, which she had made so bright and attractive; those rooms within the stone tower she had adorned and beautified until they seemed to Ned Holcomb to be an ideal spot on the earth's surface? Why, in Heaven's name, should he care?

The Lighthouse would be turned over to some rough seaman, and the beacon would shine just as well as when Ben Ker tended it with Yvette's help.

"He is much stronger and better since the warm, spring days have come, but the doctor says he must not stay at the Lighthouse another winter. Then—in June—I will go to live in the village on the island, but my darling old dad must come too. I would die if I were separated from him."

Again there was a pause, which Ned Holcomb filled up mentally by picturing what those jutting rocks would be without Yvette's presence; how desolate when her voice would no longer mingle with the beating of the surf, and she would not be there to give him a gay greeting as his boat ran up to the stone steps; when she would no longer stand looking down on him with a light of greeting in her great honest eyes, which he had grown to expect, while a sudden glow intensified her remarkable beauty.

"Why must you go to live on the island—in June?" Ned queried, without excusing the inquisitiveness of the inquiry.

"I am to—be—married in June," Yvette answered in a quiet, troubled voice.

"To whom?" Holcomb asked roughly.

"A good man—Peter Stevenson," Yvette answered, turning to look out over the water, where the last golden sun-rays were lingering before twilight would soften the crimsons and vivid purples of the sky to pale tints and fading greys.

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"And—you care for him, of course? We have grown to be such good friends, have we not? I know you will not mind telling me," Ned Holcomb said, in a friendly voice, which had a queer ring in it. "You won't mind, you are so honest and straightforward."

"I've known him all my life," Yvette said slowly. "As a little girl and when I was in the convent. In the holidays we used to play together. He was always kind and nice, and dad loves him dearly. Dad was so grieved when he was ill, thinking about me, that I promised him I would marry Peter in June. Just two weeks off now!"

"You did not answer me, Yvette," Ned half whispered, taking Yvette's hands and holding them tight. "Tell me."

A whole lifetime may be lived sometimes in a few moments. The future may stretch out before us in luminous colours, and just as a flash of lightning during the density of a storm will reveal all the hidden features of a landscape with a precision never to be obliterated from memory, so a few words under the intensity of feeling will unriddle the strange mystery of tangled hopes and desires to which we have been drifting, perhaps unconsciously.

Yvette raised her eyes steadily and met Holcomb's look and read it, as no woman ever fails to do.

"I do not now, but I will in time. He is good and loves me dearly. Stop! I know what you would say. Do you think I would let you—marry a Lighthouse keeper's daughter? You, with so much to live for? Oh, no, no! But it was pleasant. You have made these past months so bright. When I go I will remember how you used to come to our Lighthouse to cheer us, and how pleasant the evenings were. Good-bye!"

Standing before her, Ned Holcomb lost his head, and poured out the pent-up words, which, by Yvette's beauty and constant companionship during the past months, had been stored up, waiting for just such an occasion for utterance.

What did he care for the world's opinion? Ned asked. Was not happiness the sole and rightful aim of life? Has not each one the right to seek it, and grasp it, wherever and whenever the chance occurs? Is it not far more honest to break faith with one, when one's whole soul and thoughts are wrapped up in another's? Yvette spoke like a child! Like the dear, honest, unsophisticated little girl she was. It was absurd, hideous, to think for an instant of throwing herself away on a common shipwright. She must marry him, and they would go away, anywhere, and Ben Ker would join them.

Who in all this world was so beautiful and noble and fearless as Yvette? His Yvette.

"You think so now—but it's all a mistake, dear," she answered slowly, a great tenderness welling up in her heart. "Your life and mine lie far, far apart. You must go your way, and I must go mine, and we will both forget—all but the pleasant hours we spent in the old Lighthouse, and on these rocks, listening to the voices of the sea. Good-bye!"

"Do you mean it? It must be for all time, remember, Yvette."

"For all time!" she answered steadily.

Ned Holcomb looked long at the face before him, and, stooping, kissed the rich bronze hair the sea breezes loved to toy with.

And when, the wind catching the sail, his boat ran swiftly down the channel, Yvette, standing on the jutting rock, outlined on the sombre background of the old Lighthouse, the rising tide tossing their restless billows up against the rocks around her, remained forever in his memory a picture of utter loveliness, and one of most pathetic beauty.

"Where is your friend? Why did he not stay to supper? Has he gone?" queried Ben Ker, stroking Yvette's ruffled hair as she nestled against him and leaned against his shoulder.

"He's gone, dad. Gone away. He'll not come back."

"Gone away for good? Well, well! You'll miss his visits, my pet, and his books. But we'll soon leave the old Lighthouse. We'll soon leave it. I'll miss the roar of the water and the whistle of the wind at night and the lighting of the beacon.

"But life ashore will be better for my birdie. She will not miss a stranger's visits then. Peter will be here to-morrow, and we'll settle on the date in June, and soon we'll move out and let Harrison take my place. You'll have Peter to take care of you, and your old dad, Ben Ker, has provided well for his little girl. You will be happy as the day is long."

"Yes, dad, as happy as the day is long," whispered Yvette, clinging to the old man.

* * * * *

"Can anybody tell me what in the world is the matter with Ned Holcomb? Perhaps there's insanity in the family. Does anyone know anything about it?" queried Mrs. Carson of those around, while sipping tea.

"Can't imagine, unless he's in love. It must be with that wonderful siren of the sea we came across last spring. You remember? She's a perfect Lorelei—a beauty! Ned Holcomb, to my mind, has never been the same since, and his rushing off to spend the summer rambling about, all by himself, in the Alps, when Kitty had her trousseau ready, was the stupidest thing I ever heard of. If I had been Kitty I would have let him go—for good. But Kit's so dead in love with him!"

"Don't wonder. We all are. Ned Holcomb's a dear."

"Sh-s-s-s-sh! Here's Kitty!" warned someone.

There was an air of triumph about Kitty as she came in.

"Where is Ned Holcomb? Why, in town. No, I won't go to the Whirtley's next month. I'll probably be out of town."

"A bridal tour?"

Kitty nodded assent, and was pounced on by all the women present.

"Hello, old fellow. Let me congratulate you. Miss Kitty's a charming girl, and deuced clever," an acquaintance said to Holcomb at the club that night.

Ned Holcomb shook hands, and lapsed back into his moody gazing through the window.

He saw some jutting rocks, and a weather-beaten Lighthouse; breakers curling up and breaking against them, and the tall, lithe form of Yvette half hidden in the spray. He saw a beautiful face, young and strong and tender, fading out of sight.

Holcomb turned and went out, to call on Kitty Leversham, his *fiancée*.

S. Rhett Roman.

Cupid Up-to-date.

"You have made this Cupid with a revolver," said the editor to his artist. "Isn't it customary to arm the god of lovers with a bow and arrows?" "Yes, sir," replied the artist, "but art must keep up with the times."

Wise Heads on Young Shoulders.

"I know why the doctor brought that little baby," said a five-year-old the other day to her happy mother. "And why did the doctor bring the baby?" was asked. "'Cause it cries so much he didn't want to keep it himself," was the reply.

His Favourite Bird.

"Oh, Mr. Hunker!" exclaimed Miss Dorothy, who is an enthusiastic ornithologist, "which of the song birds are you fondest of?" "I prefer the hen, Miss Dorothy." "But the hen isn't a song bird." "Well, it is the only bird whose lay I care for."

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Those Buttons!

She jumped into a third-class railway carriage, just as the train was beginning to move out of the station.

A soldier was leaning out of the window on the opposite side. He did not turn his head at her somewhat flurried entrance, but continued to gaze out of the window.

The girl and the soldier were the only occupants of the compartment.

At sight of the soldier, a curious light came into the girl's eyes, for she collected military buttons. Two remarkably fine specimens gleamed on the soldier's coat, just below his pipe-clayed belt.

She fixed her eyes upon the buttons, and broke the tenth commandment. Remember, she was a button enthusiast.

Her collection, so far, was but a scanty one. She did not move in military circles. What a difference those two buttons would have made!

She wanted the buttons badly, and they were no earthly good to the soldier. What useful purpose could they possibly serve, stuck there in that foolish fashion, just where the soldier's waist ought to have been? They would certainly look much better in her little button museum, on a background of red velvet. Velvet was so much more becoming than flannel. Really, those buttons couldn't be expected to do themselves justice on red flannel!

She edged a little nearer to the soldier. She couldn't have told what regiment the buttons belonged to, but that was no matter. She wanted them. That was enough.

How easy it would be, with the help of her pocket scissors—but no, such a thing was impossible!

The hungry look deepened in her eyes. Such a look Tantalus might have worn as he gazed in agony at the golden fruit he might not reach.

It was impossible, she told herself, and yet, how easy!

Furtively she fumbled in her pocket. Then she glanced again at the burly, motionless back. Softly she crept nearer and nearer to that unconscious expanse of red flannel.

One—two little snips, and the buttons would be hers! Why not? Surely it was an innocent proceeding? Supposing she were to ask the soldier for those buttons, he would, she reflected, be only too happy to present them to her. But speak to a strange man in a railway carriage she could not. Much better do the thing quietly, without any fuss.

Would the soldier get into trouble for returning to his barracks minus two buttons? She hoped not.

Of course, if he knew nothing about their disappearance, he could not be held responsible. On the whole, therefore, it would be better that he should not know. In fairness to the poor soldier, she would snip them off behind his back.

She was almost beginning to feel as if she would be doing the soldier a service by cutting off those superfluous buttons. This, of course, is the right and proper frame of mind in which to commit any kind of sin.

With trembling fingers she brought her scissors to bear upon the button that was nearest to her.

There was an almost inaudible click, and the button was hers!

Emboldened by her success, she seized the other button between her finger and thumb.

Now, whether it was that success had made her reckless or excitement unnerved her, or whether it was an unexpected jerk in the motion of the train, the writer is not in a position to say.

Suffice it that, at the critical moment, her hand slipped, as it were, and she gave the button an involuntary pull.

The soldier looked round.

"Bess!"

"Jim!"

The button she had annexed dropped from her nerveless fingers.

He picked it up and gazed at it in silent amazement.

Then his eyes fell upon the scissors in her hand.

"My button!" he remarked, stupidly

"I collect them, you know" she said.

"Oh!"

She looked at him nervously.

His face was twitching convulsively.

"I—I suppose I ought to apologise," she stammered.

"Please don't. Would you like the other one as well?"

"No, thank you."

"But you—you were trying to snip it off when I turned round, weren't you?"

"Ye-es."

He looked at her scarlet face in evident enjoyment of her confusion.

"You have changed very much," he said, and his eyes were overrunning with laughter now. They were wonderfully pleasant eyes.

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"Two years ago," he said, "you had the keenest sense of humour of any girl I know."

At the words the whole absurdity of the situation flashed upon her.

Her merriment threatened to become almost hysterical. Suddenly she stopped laughing and looked at his soldier's uniform.

"What are you wearing those for?" she said.

"I've enlisted."

"Good heavens!"

"Six months ago."

"Can nothing be done?"

"I don't understand."

"Can't you resign, or abscond, or whatever it's called?"

"And you are the woman who collects military buttons!" he remarked sadly.

"Don't you want to get out?"

"Not till the next station but one," he replied.

"Out of the Army, I mean, of course."

"Get out of the Army? Why, I've only just got in!"

"What made you do it?"

"Love of the thing, Bess. Couldn't do it any other way, so made up my mind to start in the ranks."

"But two years ago you——"

"I had very different plans? Two years ago, if you remember, I was going to be married."

She looked at him in growing wonder. "Do you mean that for her sake you sacrificed your dearest wish?"

"I couldn't expect her to marry a common soldier, could I?"

"And she never guessed. She allowed a paltry quarrel to separate her from the man who was willing to give up so much."

"I used to think she would come back."

"And you waited?"

"Yes. Six months ago I heard she was engaged to another man."

"It was not true, Jim."

"Not true?"

"No. Jim, you said just now you couldn't expect the girl to marry a common soldier. Won't you give her the chance?"

"Bess!"

"Oh, Jim, I adore military buttons!"

Grete Hahn.

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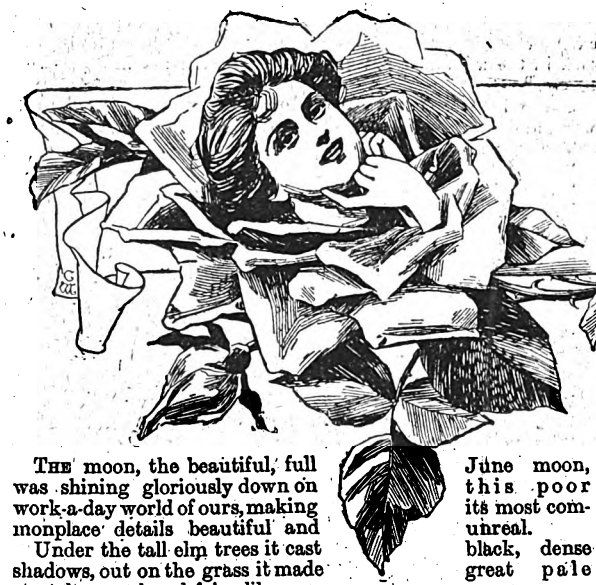

After Many Days.

Two Little Children Lead the Way.

THE moon, the beautiful, full June moon, was shining gloriously down on this poor work-a-day world of ours, making its most commonplace details beautiful and unreal.

Under the tall elm trees it cast black, dense shadows, out on the grass it made great pale stretches, cool and fairy-like.

Under the largest elm, and therefore, in the densest shadow, stood two people.

What matters it to lovers how dark it is?

Her hands were on his shoulders and her face was raised a little.

His face was white even in the moonlight, white with misery not altogether for himself, but for her whom he loved so passionately and could bring nothing but harm.

"You have everything to gain, my beautiful—I have nothing to lose," he said, stroking the soft fair hair.

"Don't speak so hopelessly, Dick," she said in a fond, but petulant tone.

The man sighed and moved a little out of the gloom. You could see then he was in the prime of his life, about thirty years of age, and she was fully ten years his junior.

"You don't understand—thank God, the full weight of misery is not on your shoulders yet. You don't know—as I do—what love means. You have not waited ten weary years for it to come, tied in a loveless, hideous union like I am, and when it has come, personified in you, my beautiful girl, I cannot take it. You don't know what it means to me not to have you, to hold you, to make your life a flower garden for evermore, to make you my queen and idol, in reality, as you are now, in thought, you don't know what it means."

"Don't talk like that, dear, it only makes it harder to bear, I——" she put in gently.

"Nothing *can* make it harder, more cruel, more unendurable than it is now!" he cried fiercely.

"It may not *always* be like this. I love you, Dick, and you love me. One day"—with a sigh she could not repress—"it may come right."

The man folded her slight figure in his arms.

"One day, my pet—it may. But life is short at best, and we are to waste our youth in longing for that which we perhaps will never get. Why did you cross my life? I could bear is easier till you came, and why, oh, why did I cross yours, to make your beautiful, happy life miserable, and shadow your bright future?"

They stood thus silent and sad together.

At last he spoke again, "You must go, Ruth, it is getting late. Good-night, my beautiful girl, my heart's bride, go and try and forget poor old Dick, who can never forget you."

"Oh, I can't go and leave you, don't send me away like that," she sobbed piteously, clinging to him.

But he was firm.

"Dearest, your good name is more to me than my own life. To be seen with me, a married man, would bring scandal to you, and if *she* were to see you, God help you then! Go, my darling, go and forget me if you can, if not, remember me, who loves you for now and always."

The lovers parted sorrowfully, and he watched her graceful little figure flit away between the shadows and over the moon spaces—the girl he loved so utterly!

When she had gone he sighed and retraced his steps, back to his loveless life, back to the sordid cares and hacking worries of everyday existence, back to everything uncongenial to his loving and affectionate nature, with nothing but the memory of one summer holiday, one pair of trusting grey eyes and one woman who henceforth was all the world to him. She walked with him to business, and sat with him in the office, she cheered him in solitude and comforted him in sorrow.

Her real self he never saw. She wrote sometimes, loving and tender letters, but the days lengthened into months and the months to years and one day a letter came. She was sorry, she loved him still, but it was so hopeless and she was so lonely. Another man had asked her to marry him and would Dick give her up? She was fond of him—after a fashion, and he would make her a good husband.

Dick sat long, looking stonily at the photograph of a lean, mean-faced man which she had inclosed. So this was to be the end, and this man, this miserable low-bred stranger (Dick could think of nothing bad enough to call him) was to take his love, take her honourably, whilst he who loved her so dearly could only stand by and look on.

"Oh, Fate, I have borne a lot," he murmured, clenching his hands at the thought, "don't put this on me, it is more than I can bear. Leave her free, don't tie her perhaps to the misery of my life. My shoulders are broad, I can bear a lot, but oh, God, not that, not that——"

And the sun went down leaving the office in a dusty dimness, and the man staring before him, his firm mouth set in even a firmer line under his fair moustache; his face whiter than ever.

Suddenly, with a sigh, he turned on the lights and wrote to her.

Wrote her from his heart, the heart she would be mistress of for ever, and told her to marry and be happy and forget him, and as he dropped the letter into the post it fell like a thud on his heart, leaving him lifeless and cold as though he were partially dead.

Galling insinuations and ceaseless bickering passed over Dick's head that night and roused neither comment nor reply. What were *her* everlasting wrangles compared to the struggle he had just gone through.

His little three-year-old son came to his knee clad in his little nightdress.

Looking up in his face he put out one little hand and murmured "Daddy," with the instinctive feeling possessed by children in the presence of trouble that they cannot understand.

He gathered the little boy in his arms in silent and passionate love. Here at least was something all his own, something whose affection was loyal and trusting, something that would help to heal the wound and fill the vacuum in his sore heart.

Later on he read the wedding in the paper. It aroused very little interest in him. Ruth was buried for ever in the depths of his being, neither to be disturbed nor banished while his life lasted.

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Like the memory of a beautiful, though priceless picture, or the scent of a vanished and unobtainable flower, she lived on with him.

And the days lengthened into months and the months into years again, and many threads of grey came to mingle with Dick's fair hair, and a look of calm and a deep hat band were all the changes in him.

For he was free now. Free, and for what? What was the use of freedom to him?

Little Paul, with the sturdy persistence of nine years, was risking his precious life climbing out on the breakwater. Dick sat with his back against it, smoking while he read the paper, whilst his small son daily did his best to annihilate himself.

He had lately gone the way of most men and taken unto his small self a sweetheart, and the father would stand and watch the youthful pair dig castles with canals to the water's edge, or hold picnics on sand tables decorated with seaweed and more or less unsavoury castings up of the tide.

A dead, very dead, starfish as a rule graced the head of the table, flanked on either side by mouldings of Paul's tin bucket trimmed with cockle shells.

Paul's "little girl," as he termed her, occupied a great deal of his time. He led her into every conceivable source of mischief and danger, over which she usually came to grief, although she rarely made an outcry, and stood by her youthful admirer with unswerving faith and affection.

One day—it was like other days to most people, but to Dick it was a memorable day—one day when the sun was shining fiercely down on the shore and the children's voices sounded dim and distant, Dick was roused by feeling an imperious little push against him. Imagining Paul was desirous of pennies or information, and being comfortable, he said "go away" and did not open his eyes. The little push was repeated.

Thus effectually roused, Dick looked up to see Paul's little sweetheart standing close to him, a rather pitiful expression on her little face. Her legs were bare, and there was a large red gash under the knee of one, from which a white handkerchief had slipped and was dangling round her ankle.

"Please, tie me up," she said. "It's comed down."

What was there in this child's little sunburnt face that attracted him?

He sat up and prepared to untie the white bandage. He sighed as he did so, the little maid had disturbed a beautiful day dream that had come to the world-weary man often through the long years. A dream, never to be realised and a dream only, but beautiful for all that.

"How did you do this?" he asked, as he spread the handkerchief on his knee.

"Fell off the iron bit of the pier."

"What out there—however did you get out there?"

"Me and Paul played sailors, and climbed out, and I fell off."

"Oh, did you! Paul will get you killed one day, little lady."

"No, it wasn't his fault, I would go," she said stoutly.

"Whose little girl are you—do you know?" queried Dick.

"I think I'm muvver's," she said uncertainly.

"You only think, eh? Do you know your name?"

"Daisy."

"What a pretty name—keep your leg still, what other name?"

"I'm Daisy Needham, my whole name."

Dick lifted his head. The little girl was looking intently at him with a pair of beautiful grey eyes.

At the same instant the edge of the bandage fell back across Dick's hand and he saw the owner's name in clear black letters, "Ruth Needham."

Her child!

For a moment the sea and sky merged into one, and everything went red before his eyes.

"Where's your mother?" he said suddenly.

"Is that lady your sweetheart?"

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Little Daisy seemed startled by his abrupt voice. She wrinkled her little face and prepared to cry.

"I haven't done anything," she said piteously.

He took the child in his arms.

"Don't be frightened, darling, tell me, where is your mother?" he said repenting his violence.

"Over there," pointing vaguely to the cliffs in the distance.

Dick strained his eyesight but could see nothing.

"Where's your Daddy, dearie?" he asked again.

There was no answer.

"Don't you know, Daisy?"

"Yes, Paul said he's with his muvver."

"Whose mother?"

"Paul's."

A light broke on Dick. For the first time he noticed the little child was in black. With a sudden gasp he realised the situation.

Rising, he reached for his straw hat.

"Tell me where Mammy is?" he asked in a voice strangely calm.

The child pointed out a heap of boulders.

"Over behind there," she said.

"Run then and play with Paul," he said and started in the direction.

Time, age, possible forgetfulness, everything past faded from his mind.

She was there, she was free!

Without pausing a moment he strode rapidly on past the boulders.

Resting, sheltered in a warm corner, was a slight fair woman in black. She had been reading, but the book lay unheeded on her lap and her eyes looked dreamily out to sea.

A shadow fell across her, and she looked up and met his gaze fixed upon her.

A faint smile came over her face, and she held out her hands to him.

"Dick," was all she said.

He took them in his own without a word. What need had they to speak, the question was asked and the question was answered in that one glance.

The seagulls wheeled overhead and the salt breeze flapped the pages of her book, but neither noticed.

"At last you have come," she murmured, "I have waited so long for you, Dick."

"I never knew till now you were here."

"I couldn't come to you—I waited for you to come until"—here a blush came into her pale face—"until I couldn't wait any longer, and I sent Daisy."

"My darling, my own, my only love, if I had only known!"

"Yes, I told her to go and ask you to tie up her little leg."

There was a long pause again. Dick had nothing to say.

Her fair head was resting on his shoulder, and the weary weight of years seemed suddenly to have lifted off his heart.

All he wanted was to read the love in her face and rest content.

How long they sat thus neither of them knew, but suddenly Dick became aware of the vicinity of Paul.

Paul stood looking at his father in an astounded manner. Never in the course of his short life had anyone rested on his shoulder but his own small self.

A light broke on his understanding after a while. His beloved Daddy was evidently in the height of enjoyment, judging from his countenance, so Paul thought he would hazard a few remarks on the subject

"Is that lady your sweetheart?" he said curiously.

Dick replied she was.

"The same as Daisy is mine?"

"Yes."

"Oh, she's Daisy's mother, isn't she?"

"She is, my boy,"—pressing the little hand he held in his own.

"And do sweethearts do as you do?"

"Always."

"Oh!" the little boy seemed mystified.

"I'm going to marry Daisy, are you going to marry your sweetheart?"

"Ruth, what shall I tell him?" Dick whispered.

For answer she looked at him with a smile.

"Yes, Paul, I am," he said.

"And is it nice, like that?"

"Very, now run and dig castles and don't ask anything more," concluded Dick, tired of his youthful son's interrogation.

There was another long pause and then Dick was once more brought out of heaven, and in no uncertain manner.

Little Daisy was screaming, while Paul, very red and masterful was holding her down with the assistance of a spade and both arms.

"You shall, you shall! It's right and you can't play if you don't," he shouted.

"What on earth are you doing? Leave off tormenting the child, you shall go to school my lad, if you give any more bother," cried his parent.

"Well, we're playing sweethearts and Daisy doesn't understand, and won't be bear-hugged."

"So because she wouldn't let you kiss her, I suppose you beat her. Your methods are primitive, Paul."

"I didn't beat her, Daddy, I hit her with the spade. Did you hit the lady when she wouldn't be your sweetheart?"

Dick put his hand under Ruth's chin and lifted it up, "Did I sweetheart?"

"I don't think so, although I daresay I deserved it," she replied, and lifting her head a little more their lips met in a long passionate kiss.

Little Paul was intensely interested. This was the pinnacle of sweethearting if only Daisy could be made to see it in the same light. What a grand game, with Daddy and the lady and all!

But Daisy refused point-blank, and although Paul had repeated recourse to the spade, his barbarous overtures were unavailing.

Finally Ruth solved the problem for her now weeping little daughter.

Drying the child's eyes she said, "See me do it," and putting her arms round Dick she kissed him.

Daisy was conquered, and forthwith embraced the delighted Paul.

Dick looked up to see his young son imitating his every action, and broke out into a laugh.

A great hearty laugh, the laugh of a young man, for when one is happy what matters how old one is, and after all, Love is always young.

Erroll Stanhope.

LOOK OUT FOR OUR NEXT WEEK'S COVER. IT IS A REMARKABLE ONE.

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HER LETTER.

"What have you got to say to me?"

"Nothing."

"Why did you send for me?"

A flush of red rose to her face.

"I thought, yesterday, when I wrote, that I had something to say, but now——"

"You have changed your mind, Miss Austin? That is a woman's privilege and you have used it ruthlessly."

"Yes, I know. Forgive me. I meant to do my best."

He frowned and his expression was not good to see.

"Her best." And this is what she had done.

Last Spring he had thought himself one of the happiest men alive, engaged to be married to this girl, Eva Austin; he loved her passionately, and believed her to be the ideal type of womanhood, high principled, truthful, gentle—in fact, almost faultless.

One day, a few months ago, she had written to break off her engagement, a short letter which was a masterpiece of polite reserve and feminine cruelty. She regretted if she had caused him any pain—oh, yes, regrets cost nothing—she was conscious of the honour that he had paid her—she wished to remain his friend—she returned his ring.

Captain Humphrey travelled many miles to demand an explanation of his affianced wife. He was refused admittance, his letters were returned unopened by her sister—Eva was ill and could not write. The truth stared him in the face; in plain English he had been hopelessly jilted. Then he vowed to forget Eva Austin's existence and congratulated himself upon his freedom from domestic ties.

To-day, as he stood in the parlour of the hotel to which she had summoned him, he had so far overlooked his determination to forget her existence, that his anger was waxing fierce against her. Why had she brought him here? To be made a fool of a second time? No, and a thousand times, no.

"If you did your best, Miss Austin, may I ask what your worst would have been?"

She moved quickly, almost as if he had struck her.

"I cannot explain. If you knew how it all happened you would perhaps believe—you might perhaps think a little better of me."

He stood bolt upright, speechless. He was struggling with his pride; in his heart of hearts he was longing to take her in his arms, to tell her that for him she was the only woman in the world, with all her faults.

Her faults. They were unpardonable.

"I should be glad to think well of any lady," he said at last, lightly, "more especially of a lady who once honoured me with her friendship."

"Yes," she said gently, "it was because of that friend that I wrote. I had a favour to ask you. Now—it is not necessary. I am sorry."

There was a brief silence, then she said:

"There are changes in our family. Ella is going to be married; the engagement is very sudden, it was only settled this morning."

Ella was the younger sister of whom he had so often been jealous in those forgotten days.

"Allow me to congratulate you."

He bowed and turned to go; the interview was a farce.

At the door she stopped him.

"Do you start—to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Good-bye. We, that is, Ella and I, wish you a happy return."

Considering their former intimacy, this was barely the farewell that good manners demanded, nothing more.

His hand was on the lock. Something else she said, her voice was almost inaudible:

"I will pray for you."

He shut the door quietly, there should be no melodramatic display of temper on his part. Arrived at the bottom of the stairs, he missed his hat. Had he left his purse or his watch in that room, no power on earth would have sent him back—but his hat.

He ran back hastily and knocked. There was no answer. So much the better. He entered the room and seized his property. Turning to go, he heard the rustle of draperies. She was there, standing on the spot where he had left her, with her hands clasped to her face.

* * * * * *

Under the cold star-lit sky he had lain for hours. The fight was over. In the distance he could discern the figures of the wounded and the dead.

The victory was with his men—so much he knew before he fell. And now, patience. They would find him by-and-by. If not, then the end could not be far off, not very far. Patience. The stars flickered and faded. He saw a room, with pale pink walls, flowers, a work basket on the table—nothing escaped his notice. Eva was there, she had on a grey dress and a gold chain round her neck.

Were there tears in her eyes? There were tears in his. "I will pray for you."

That is what she said at parting, and he had pretended not to hear. He saw her again praying for the man who had not condescended to accept her good wishes.

In the old days he had often smiled at her earnestness, and called her a little Puritan; in later times he had raged at her as a hypocrite.

Do hypocrites look like that?

What did it matter what he called her? His one wish now was that she should know that he died blessing her. With infinite difficulty he found his pocket-book and wrote her name on the flyleaf. His hand trembled; before the pencil slipped from his grasp he scrawled feebly: "God bless you, Eva."

The orderly brought a bundle of letters into the shed which had been hastily converted into a hospital. The men crowded eagerly round him; even Captain Humphrey, who was "dangerously" wounded, turned an anxious face towards the messenger.

The captain recognised the shape and colour of the envelope that was brought to his bedside; the handwriting, too, was familiar. It was Ella Austin's.

"Now that I am happily married I must free my conscience and tell you our secret. Think as badly of me as you can, Eva sacrificed herself for me. I told her that I cared for you, that is why she wrote that letter. Afterwards, when she was ill, I sent back your letters without her knowledge."

The lines jumped up and down before the sick man's eyes; he read on:

"Eva wanted to put things right between you and me; that is why she sent for me before you left. Didn't you guess? She found out her mistake before you came and took all the blame on herself to shield me. You will never forgive me, I should not, but I can't bear to think that you are still misjudging her."

* * * * * *

"Will he pull through, doctor?" asked a young officer that night. He it was who had found the captain and brought him into shelter.

"Pull through? Yes, now his mind's at rest."

"What's he been worrying about?"

"What do we all worry about, eh?"

The officer did not answer—he wasn't going to tell his secrets to the wily doctor.

"The first night he wanted to risk his life writing or dictating letters home. Now, I think he's satisfied with the news that to-day's mail brought him. Look at him."

"He's asleep," said the other in a whisper; "and, doctor, he's got a letter tucked away under his pillow."

H. Mackenzie.

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But He Didn't.

Daughter: "He says he worships the ground I walk on." Farmer: "He does, eh? Then p'raps he'll help me to pay off the mortgage on it."

Too Great an Alteration.

He: "Will you love me if I give up all my bad habits?" She (protesting): "But, George, how could you expect me to love a perfect stranger?"

Anticipation.

Anderson: "My! How meekly your wife obeys you. Is she afraid of you?" Billings: "Not much. She's working me for a new bonnet."

Her Very Own.

Edwin (tenderly touching her tresses): "Sweet one, let me be like this lovely hair." Angelina (tremulously): "What, dearest, what would you be?" Edwin (rapturously): "All your own."

Knew What it Meant.

"Ah, Jones, old man," said Hicks, as he and Jones walked home from the club; "there's a light in the window for you. You married men——" "By George, so there is!" returned Jones. "Let's go back to the club!"

His Birthday Present.

"Henry!" she said disconsolately, "you didn't give me a birthday gift." "By Jove, that's so!" said Henry. "But, you see, I can't realise that you ever have birthdays." Then she was happy, and he smiled the mean, subtle smile of a man who has saved money.

To Smoke or Not to Smoke.

A contemporary, opposed to the use of tobacco, says: "The women ought to make a pledge not to kiss a man who uses tobacco, and it will soon break up the practice." It would be broken up much sooner, were the ladies to pledge themselves to kiss every man who does not use it.

The Uses of Astronomy.

Rural Uncle: "Now, wot's th' use o' teaching gals all these new-fangled studies? Wot good is this 'ere astronomy you're studyin'?" Niece from town: "Why uncle, it's a delightful subject to talk about on moonlight evenings. We point out Venus, and then the young man says something pretty, and then—see that ring!"

A Warning.

Fond Mother: "Now look here, George! I want you to break off with that girl. She is very pretty and all that; but I know her too well to want you to risk your life and happiness by marrying her. Why, she knows no more about housekeeping than I do about Greek—not a bit!" George: "Perhaps not; but she can learn." Mother: "After marriage is rather late for that, George." George: "But you said yourself that you did not know a thing about housekeeping until after you were married." Mother: "Very true, George—and your poor father died of dyspepsia twenty years ago."

Dispatch in Marriage.

A quick courtship is chronicled by a Georgia paper. A man stopped at a house in Douglasville and asked a lady for a glass of water. When he had quenched his thirst he asked if she was married or single. She replied "Widow." On which the man said he was a widower in search of a wife. "Walk in," answered the widow, "and we'll talk the matter over." One hour later the twain were made one by the nearest minister.

He was Nervous.

She: "Why do you toy so nervously with that fan—are you afraid of it?" He (gallantly): "I am afraid of anything that could produce a coolness between us."

Getting On.

"How is your daughter getting on with the piano, Jones?" "First rate. She can play with both hands now. Says she'll be able to play with her ear in six months."

Cruel Candour.

"I was hit on the head and knocked senseless by a brick-bat when I was a boy," said Mr. Dullpate. "Dear me," replied Miss Brasher, "and is it absolutely incurable?"

Very Sudden.

Frank Fairleigh: "Yes, Miss Antique, to be frank with you——" Miss Antique (with a chirp): "Oh, Mr. Fairleigh, of course, you may be Frank with me—but this is so sudden."

Bachelor Ignorance.

Young Mother: "He is somewhat cross to-day. He is teething." Old Bachelor (in great awe of the mite of humanity): "And when do you expect him to commence—er—commence—hairing?"

Unappreciated.

"So you wrote her a poem?" "Yes," replied the young man sadly. "What did she say?" "She said she admired my letter, but she didn't quite understand why every line began with a capital letter."

All the Difference.

He: "I am rather in favour of the English than the American mode of spelling." She: "Yes?" He: "Yes, indeed! Take 'parlour,' for instance. Having 'u' in it makes all the difference in the world."

Her Economy.

Husband: "Have you done your best to economise this month, Mary, as I requested?" Wife (brightly): "Oh, yes; I spoke to the grocer, the butcher, and the landlord, and got them to put off sending in their bills till next month."

A Bad Blunder.

Visitor (in gaol, to prisoner): "What are you here for?" Prisoner: "For stealing." Visitor: "What did you steal?" Prisoner: "I stole a girl's affections." Visitor: "Well, that is no infraction of the law?" Prisoner: "H—m, I carried 'em off with her father's horse and cart."

His Wife was Away.

Kickwood (to his old schoolfellow, whom he has met by chance): "Come into the house, old man. Here's a bottle. Have a drink." Bunker: "Does your wife let you drink?" Kickwood: "Why, of course! Have a cigar, won't you?" Bunker: "Thanks. Does your wife (puff) allow you to smoke (puff, puff) in the house?" Kickwood: "Certainly! We'll have dinner, and then we'll go round to the club and meet some of the boys." Bunker: "Does your wife let you go to the club?" Kickwood: "Why, of course!" Bunker: "Um—where is your wife?" Kickwood: "She is visiting relatives in the country."

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A Unique Prize Offered to Readers.

THE offer of such a sum as **Five Shillings a Day for Life** at first strikes one as being merely a novelty. It is a difficult matter for people to realise what **Five Shillings a Day for Life** would actually mean to them.

Supposing you live to the age of seventy-five—a by no means outside estimate under natural conditions—then you will have received one or other of the huge sums shown below:—

If your age now is		you will receive more than		If your age now is		you will receive more than	
„	40	„	£3,150	„	20	„	£5,000
„	30	„	£4,100	„	15	„	£5,450

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO ...

On the next page you will find twelve pictures. Each of these pictures consists of a certain number of objects. These objects, either singly or collectively, represent the name of a town or place in the United Kingdom.

What you have to do is to find the town or place with the longest name entirely from the names of objects depicted in the pictures (or from their phonetic equivalents).

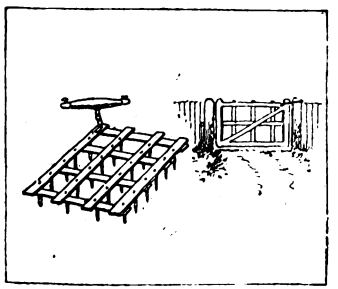
An "object" does not include sky or shading necessary for a correct drawing.

When you have done this, write the name down in the space provided, and keep the page by you. Then obtain a copy of the *Royal Magazine* for June (now on sale) and discover the names depicted in the next twelve pictures. Don't send in this page until you see the closing date stated in the *Royal Magazine*.

... Chief Conditions. ...

1. The names must be clearly written in ink. (*Use a fine pen.*)
2. Only one name is allowed under each picture.
3. No alterations are to be allowed in the words. If you have made a mistake in the spelling, cross the word out and write it again.
4. The name of the place with the greatest number of letters depicted in each picture is the correct solution, but if there are two or more such names of places depicted in one picture with an equal number of letters, then each will be counted correct.
5. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers who send out circulars, or whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and winners will be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

Every competitor must abide by the conditions stated in the ROYAL MAGAZINE.



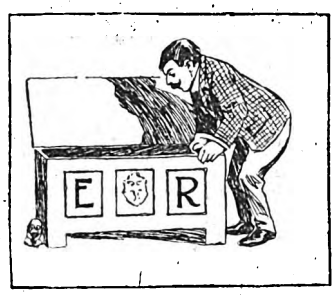
CORRECT SOLUTION: HARROGATE.
INCORRECT SOLUTIONS: (1) HARROW: Because it comprises fewer letters than Harrogate. (2) GATE (for same reason.)

The Prize of 5s. a Day for Life

Will be given to the competitor from whom the Editor of the *Royal Magazine* receives a set of pages containing the greatest number of correct solutions.

The sum of £100 will be divided, at the discretion of the Editor, amongst those who come next.

All the names depicted in the sketches will be found as printed in the list of Provincial Post Offices in the Post Office Guide, which may be consulted at any Post Office, or may be purchased for 6d.



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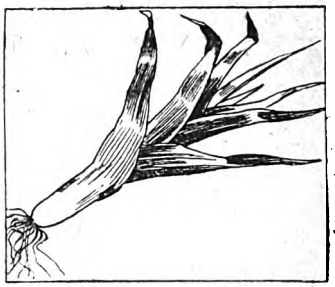

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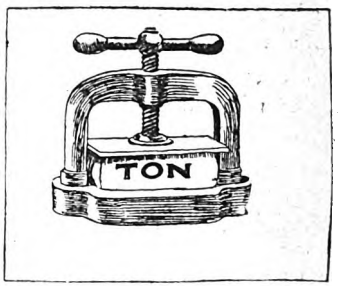

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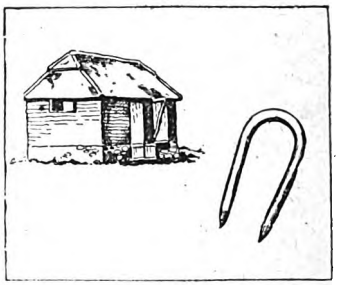

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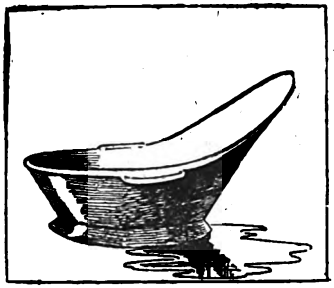

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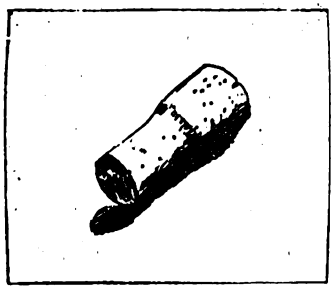

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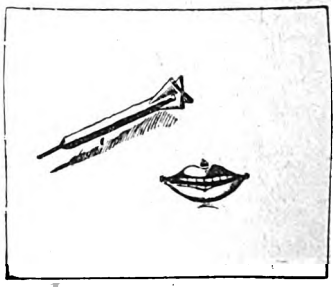

12.....

Name..... *Address*.....

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THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Mysteries by R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," "The Golden Dwarf," &c., &c.

THE RIDDLE OF THE GIPSY CARAVAN.

CHAPTER I.

The Camp by the Wayside.

"Beg pardon, sir, but might you be going anywhere near Brickfield Lane this afternoon?"

Lucius Shand checked the quick strides that were carrying him through the shallow puddles and greasy mud of the worst road in the division and held his umbrella at an angle with the driving March rain. A constable in glistening waterproof cape and soaked helmet had accosted him.

"I believe," said the surgeon, "that I am passing the top of it. Is there any reason why I should go down?"

"Well, sir," was the answer, "I suppose it would be pretty much an errand of mercy, though these gipsies are worth a bit occasionally. But about an hour ago a man from one of the encampments there, came up to me and asked where he could find a doctor who would go to his daughter; she was dying, he feared. I ventured to suggest his sending as far as your place, sir, thinking you'd be less stiff over doing a good turn of the sort than some of the medical gentlemen round. He said he would, but seeing you in the neighbourhood, sir, I felt it would save time if I mentioned it."

"Very considerate on your part, constable," observed Lucius Shand; "which of the encampments must I make for? There are, as you say, several."

"The one that lies close to the edge of the brickfield itself, sir," he was told, "at the bend of the lane. You'll see a yellow caravan and an old grey horse, gone in the knees. There's only that and one hut, sir."

"Good," said the surgeon, "then I'll drop in on the Romanies and secure a blessing, if I can't a fee. Dirty day, isn't it?" And, returning the constable's salute, Lucius Shand splashed off down the muddy road.

Ten minutes later he had reached the upper extremity of a wretched, semi-rustic thoroughfare, bordered by a few score acres of clayey grassland. This was Brickfield Lane, and he went down it at his usual rapid pace.

The encampment referred to by the constable, was easily distinguished from those adjacent, which stood at a greater distance from the gravel footpath. The yellow van and the melancholy grey horse were also in evidence—a thin wisp of smoke rose from the stove-pipe of the vehicle. The surgeon crossed a strip of sodden green, mounted the steps of the caravan, and knocked at the door. A woman opened it—a woman old and stooping, with a tanned, ugly visage, glittering coal-black eyes, and a long nose over a nut-cracker chin.

"What d'you want?" she snarled, after an eagle glance at his face and garments. Lucius Shand closed his umbrella.

"I am a doctor," he replied, "Dr. Shand. You have a person ill here—I understand you were advised to send for me."

"Oh," grumbled the old crone, "Jan did go, but you were out." She leant from the doorway, made a trumpet of her withered palms, and shouted in the direction of the hut.

The summons was answered by the appearance of a swarthy, yet unmistakably handsome fellow in soiled, nondescript garments. Raven-haired, lean, athletic, sullen, he presented a sinister picture as he strolled to the wooden ladder that gave access to the caravan. As he approached it, the gipsy woman called to him in the foreign-sounding lingo of the Romany folk. Lucius Shand understood it—his accomplishments were many and various—though he gave no visible sign of comprehension.

"Afternoon, sir," said the new-comer, civilly enough, "it's my daughter, Miriam. She's been ailing a long time, but for the last day or two she's been terrible bad—won't eat anything or sit up, just seems to doze and get weaker and weaker: doesn't she, mother?"

The surgeon glanced at the speaker under his bushy auburn brows—there was an odd, whining ring in the voice of the younger gipsy.

"Yes, indeed," assented the elder, "and yet we've done our best for her always, sir, our very best."

"Quite so," remarked Lucius Shand, sharply, "suppose, however, that you allow me to see your daughter, Mr.—Mr.—"

"My name is Lyle, sir," said the man; "Jan Lyle. Let the doctor go inside, mother, you're blocking up the door."

The old crone changed her position with alacrity, and the surgeon entered the cramped and awkward interior of the caravan. At its further end was a sort of berth, and in this lay a feminine figure. Lucius Shand started—the face on the pillow, though of an obviously gipsy cast and as duskily white as ivory, had a rare and delicate beauty. Neither it nor the arm that rested on the counterpane was in the least degree wasted—their soft roundness rather suggested a blooming womanhood.

The surgeon took up the nerveless wrist and felt for the pulse, then bent to place his ear over the region of the heart. When he rose, it was to lift the drooped lids and peer into the brown pupils.

A square of mirror hung over the bed, against the blank wall of the vehicle, and by it Lucius Shand saw that the two gipsies had followed him into the van. Ignorant of his covert survey they were watching him keenly—the surgeon studied their villainous countenances at his leisure.

"You have called me too late," he said at last, "your daughter, Mr. Lyle, is dead."

The elder gipsy broke into a wail, and her son recoiled as if in horror and amazement. Lucius Shand's fingers were lingering upon the white wrist, his brows had contracted, and a furrow of profound thought showed itself between them.

A murmur reached him as he stood there—a murmur in the Romany speech that is known to few in the world save the gipsy tribes themselves and even among them is decaying. Mrs. Lyle had whispered a sentence to her companion. Whatever its purport was, it served to smooth the furrow out of the surgeon's forehead. He turned from the bedside and picked up his umbrella.

"I am sorry I can do nothing," he said, with a sympathetic air, "but, after all, we doctors are only human."

The gipsy woman threw her apron over her face and sobbed loudly—her son drew a step closer, fishing a dingy leather purse out of his pocket.

"It's a blow to us, sir," he mumbled, "but you've had the trouble of coming, and if we are poor, we can pay our way

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and there'll be the death-certificate. I reckon it was her heart, sir, wasn't it? Miriam suffered a lot with her heart, poor dear, faintings and flutterings, and such-like."

His black eyes stole cautiously to the surgeon's impassive countenance as he shook a few silver coins from the purse. Lucius Shand motioned them aside.

"Don't worry about that," he said, "I was in these parts on other business. As to the death-certificate, I'll —I'll send you it on—upon the proper form."

Jan Lyle hesitated; a look of disappointment had flickered across his features. The divisional surgeon noticed it. Yet he strode unconcernedly to the exit of the caravan and descended the steep stair. From the edge of the brickfield he struck up the miry lane, moving with the singularly swift walk of which he alone seemed to possess the secret, and screening himself with his umbrella against the pelting rain.

His progress was suddenly arrested. Passing a thick hedgerow he felt his arm touched, and, swinging round, perceived a young fellow in the garb of a workman, with heavy boots, corduroys, and soft cap, beneath which was a face incongruously sensitive and refined.

"Excuse me, sir," stammered the other, "but are you a doctor?"

"That is my profession," answered Lucius Shand, "is anything wrong—are you unwell?"

"No, no!" was the reply, and the speaker's voice was both pleasant and cultivated, "but I saw you enter the caravan up the road. I have observed you frequently in the neighbourhood, and guessed you must be a medical man. Do you mind telling me if you happened to see, during your visit, a lady—a—a young woman, that is, rather tall and dark, with brown eyes and hair?"

"I did," said the divisional surgeon, regarding him with interest, "it was to her I was called."

"Then she is ill!" exclaimed the other; "I knew it!" He clutched at Lucius Shand's arm. "But not seriously?" he pleaded, "don't say that, for Heaven's sake, don't say that!"

There was a moment's pause before the surgeon replied. The response itself was curiously put.

"If you will inquire at the van yonder," he said, "you will learn that I was summoned too late to be of any use."

His questioner staggered. "Dead, dead!" he gasped, "my wife dead! Oh, it is impossible, impossible!" He turned away, with bowed head and shaking shoulders. When he looked up again at Lucius Shand he had regained his self-control, and his expression was strangely stern and cold.

"Then I am free to revenge myself," the surgeon was told; "will you have the goodness to direct me to the nearest police-station."

Lucius Shand pulled at the lobe of his right ear. "May I ask," he said, "what you propose to do there?"

"You may," rejoined the other, "I go to charge John Lyle and Sarah Lyle, his mother, with carrying off by force and detaining against her will, my wife, Miriam West, John Lyle's daughter, and with directly or indirectly causing her death. I am Joscelyn West, an artist, and despite these clothes, what I suppose you would call a gentleman."

The surgeon nibbled reflectively an end of his moustache.

"If you will take my advice, Mr. West," he answered, "you will do no such thing. Listen—" and he whispered deliberately in Joscelyn West's ear.

"Great Heavens!" cried the artist, "but why—why—?"

Lucius Shand interrupted.

"Leave yourself in my hands, Mr. West," he said, "or you may have cause to repent it. In that group of encampments there are a score of lawless fellows, while we could only hope for the possible assistance of a constable now half a mile away. A journey to the police-station would waste time. Pardon my impertinence, Mr. West, but your story lacks corroboration, while your attire is that of a person

"What d'you want?" she snarled, after an eagle glance at his face and garments.

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in a humble sphere. You might secure investigation, but you would certainly meet with delay."

Joscelyn West coloured. "I—I can easily explain," he responded. "My marriage was an unusual one. I encountered Miriam Lyle by chance, in a rustic corner of England. Her mother had been a girl of position and some small fortune, who had been decoyed into a mad marriage with that handsome scoundrel Jan, or John Lyle. She died young, and old Mrs. Lyle brought up her one baby—Miriam. I saw her, asked her to sit for me, came to care for her—she was her mother's, not her father's child—she gave her folks the slip, and I married her in London."

The narrator drew a long breath and set his teeth. "Before that," he said, "her life had been a martyrdom. The Lyles are practically professional criminals—Miriam told me enough to hang her father twice over—he has been a burglar, thief, assassin. He chose to believe that her marriage with a respectable member of society threatened his neck, though what she told me would not have been evidence, and Miriam would never have betrayed him for her mother's sake. However, he stole her from me, warning me, by one of his rascally comrades, that the penalty of pursuing her would be her death or mine, possibly both."

Lucius Shand nodded. "Hence your disguise," he commented.

"Exactly," rejoined the artist. "Pursue her I did, and through the length and breadth of England. Once or twice I got on their track, only to lose the trail again. A week ago I picked it up in earnest and saw Lyle, as I fear he saw me. Since then I have been prowling round, seeking to ascertain if Miriam were with the Lyles or some other band of gipsies, for, of course, there is a strong freemasonry among them. Finally, noticing you enter the Lyle's caravan, I ventured to accost you."

"Quite so," said the surgeon. "Well, now, Mr. West, you can do nothing better at present than go down to my surgery, where I will join you shortly. Here is my card."

He whipped out the pasteboard, looked at his watch, and buttoned his ulster.

"Meanwhile," he added, "I must hasten to put in hand one or two matters of considerable importance. Be reassured, Mr. West, they relate to your affairs. You are in division B., and in Division B, Lucius Shand, M.R.C.S., is not without power, though he says it as shouldn't. For the moment, adieu; you go that way, I this."

Lucius Shand showed his white teeth in a cheerful smile, and set off down the rain-swept lane. After a lengthy pause of indecision, the artist took the opposite direction, walking with slow, reluctant steps, and occasionally turning to glance at the mysterious caravan.

CHAPTER II.

"I Was Right, After All."

"Now, ma'm, we're sorry, but it's no use resisting us in the execution of our duty. I am the coroner's officer and I've a waggon and half a dozen constables outside—we know you gipsies don't like complying with coroners' orders and we are prepared to enforce ours, if necessary. So let us in without any fuss."

A powerful yet insinuating pressure was applied to the door of the caravan by the edge of the road. Mrs. Lyle was forced to beat a retreat, muttering to herself as she went.

The intruder—a self-possessed, uniformed figure—gained the interior of the vehicle, removing his peaked cap considerately.

"Dr. Shand, ma'am," he said, "has reported to the coroner for the district that he was called to a patient here and found her dead. Under the circumstances there must be an examination and an inquest."

"But—but," faltered the gipsy woman, "the doctor hasn't been gone an hour; why should everything be done in such a hurry?"

"Our instructions, ma'am," she was told, imperturbably, and the official leant out of the narrow doorway to motion his assistant. In the lane close by stood a light, one-horsed conveyance of grained wood, with a large entrance at the rear and windows of fluted glass. It bore an unmistakable similarity to an ambulance. About it was a small squad of police.

Superintended by the coroner's representatives, a couple of constables opened the conveyance, drew out a stretcher and carried it into the caravan. When they reappeared it supported the inanimate form of the gipsy girl whose pulseless wrist Lucius Shand had fingered so doubtfully.

The old crone shook her impotent fist at them from her own threshold. "If my son hadn't gone to arrange about the funeral," she screamed, "you shouldn't take her. He'll make you pay for this; he'll make you pay!"

Unheeding her threats and anathemas, the men carried their burden to the waiting waggon, lifted it in and closed the doors. The coroner's officer and his assistant mounted to the box beside the driver and the conveyance went off at a swift yet easy trot. The constables that had accompanied it fell into line and marched gravely away, a sergeant on the flank of the little file.

As the lightly-hung waggon moved off, someone who had been seated within it rose and dropped on one knee by the stretcher. It was Lucius Shand. Nor was he alone—a woman in the neat grey garb of a hospital nurse stood beside him.

The surgeon took a stethoscope from his hat, put the hat itself on the floor of the ambulance, and placed the instrument above the heart of the gipsy girl. Bending over the silent form he listened intently, then shook his head, and turned to extract a keen steel blade from a bag at his elbow. With this he made a deft incision in a vein of the girl's fore-arm. No blood flowed—the flesh, as he touched it, was icily cold.

Lucius Shand rubbed his chin thoughtfully and felt for his match-box. He struck a vesta and held the palm of Miriam West in front of it. A faint tinge of pink showed at the margin of the fingers.

A low whistle broke from the surgeon's lips and once more he had recourse to the bag. The nurse watched him intelligently.

"Lift her up a little, nurse," he said, opening a bottle with a ground-glass stopper. A stinging, acrid odour filled the ambulance—the smell of ammonia. Lucius Shand was pouring a portion of the fluid into the reservoir of a chloroform-mask—he fitted it cautiously over the mouth and nostrils of the gipsy girl. Drastic as was the restorative it had not the slightest effect.

Lucius Shand put down the mask and pondered. He roused himself to fish out of the well-stored bag a circular mirror and laid it, face downward, on the lips and nose of Miriam West. At the end of five minutes he whisked it off and inverted it. There was a dim mist on one part of the mirror that vanished while he looked. A smile of gratification flickered across the surgeon's features and he glanced from the window impatiently. The ambulance was just entering the courtyard of a great hospital. Lucius Shand addressed himself to the nurse, upon whom not a motion of the surgeon had been lost.

"Blankets, nurse," he instructed, "and plenty of them. I was right, after all."

"You usually are, sir," ventured the nurse, and again a smile crossed her companion's countenance as he got down

and hurried into the huge red-brick building. The dusk was falling—deepened by the gloom of the wet March day. As Lucius Shand went along the wide central corridor a youthful house-surgeon met him.

"Well," said the latter, banteringly, "and have you discovered any justification for turning our ambulance into a mortuary-waggon?"

"Come and see," was the answer; "have the operating-theatre lit up, there's a good fellow and——" The rest of the sentence dropped into an undertone as the two medical men walked off together.

When the unconscious form of the gipsy girl had been borne into a large, white-tiled apartment and laid on an ingenious table under a concentrated yet soft radiance, the house-surgeon cried out:

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "what a lovely creature—as faultless and as chilly as a statue. I'm afraid it's all up with her, though, Shand."

"Give us the strongest current you've got," said Lucius Shand, pointing to an adjacent stand, with a couple of coils of green-wrapped wire conspicuous among its vulcanite fittings; "and for Heaven's sake don't waste any time—her temperature's lowering fast."

With expert hands the two adjusted the instrument and its damp sponge "contacts," while the nurse slipped a rubber insulating sheet under their patient. The house-surgeon seized the highly-geared handle and spun it round with his eye on the index. Lucius Shand had put his fingers on the nerveless wrist.

"More, more!" he said, and the operator bent to his task. Suddenly there was a long and shuddering inspiration, and the graceful head of the gipsy girl moved abruptly. Still the handle spun and a cry burst from the pallid lips. The divisional surgeon signed to his colleague, the current of electricity was moderated and then stopped.

"Where am I, oh, where am I?" faltered a girlish voice. Lucius Shand answered soothingly.

"In the Royal Hospital," he said, "see, here is your nurse. Do not excite yourself; all is well."

The girl's brown head was raised again to glance at the group about her.

The artist was kneeling by his wife's bed—one of the gipsy girl's small brown palms lay on his curly head.

"And you got me away from father and grannie?" she murmured, "oh, I am glad! But what have you been doing to me—have I been very ill; was there an accident?"

The divisional surgeon motioned to the nurse to remove the damp sponges which formed the electrical connections.

"Nothing of any importance," he replied, "you slept a trifle too long for our liking, so we wakened you rather forcibly. And now you shall go comfortably to bed and have something to eat. By-the-bye, is there anyone you would wish us to send for?"

The pretty face under the intense light looked up at him eagerly and the gipsy girl clasped her hands.

"My husband—my," she said, "Mr. Joscelyn West—oh, but I don't know where he will be or how you can find out." And the brown eyes filled with tears.

"Calm yourself, Mrs. West," Lucius Shand bade her, cheerfully, "I think I can produce him within the next half-hour.

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For the present, we will leave you to your nurse, who will see that you are taken good care of."

Evading his patient's breathless questions, he went down to the hall and sent a messenger to his surgery for the artist.

"I've kept you waiting a dickens of a time," he said, when Joscelyn West arrived, still in his rough disguise, "but if you will go up into Ward 8 and ask for Mrs. West, I think you can be persuaded to excuse the delay."

The artist wrung the hand of the divisional surgeon and tried to speak, but could not. Then he darted up the stone stairs with the speed of a greyhound. Lucius Shand followed him leisurely and peeped into the ward. The artist was kneeling by his wife's bed—one of the gipsy girl's small brown palms lay on his curly head.

Lucius Shand chuckled and strolled away downstairs. His *confrère* of the hospital overtook him.

"My dear fellow!" said the young house-surgeon, "what on earth made you think that woman wasn't dead? You admitted that she was cold and had no perceptible pulse."

The divisional surgeon smiled. "Her eyes," he responded, "the pupils were contracted to pin-points. That suggested drugging, especially as there was no sign of wasting or illness about her. So, by way of a ruse, I said that she was dead, and her old witch of a grandmother muttered to the rascally father—in Romany, which I happen to understand—'He is fooled, right enough; ask him for the certificate now.' That was sufficient for me. I promised to send on the required document, and left—to drop across the pursuing husband in disguise and discover the key to the whole romance. The rest was easy—a coroner's order and your ambulance and they were fairly checkmated."

"But what was the object of the drugging," demanded the house-surgeon; "they didn't want to bury her alive?"

"Hardly," assented Lucius Shand, "more probably they proposed to have a mock funeral on the strength of my precious death certificate—a device which would have effectually put Mr. Joscelyn West off the further pursuit of his wife. Of course, they counted without what Shakespeare calls 'crowner's quest law' and overlooked the dreadful possibility that some practitioner in a hurry might have performed an autopsy under it and so have turned a mimic death into a real one."

The house-surgeon shivered. "What a ghastly mishap it would have been!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," said Lucius Shand, "the least bit of ill-luck and Mrs. West might have been done for completely. As it was I had to chance leaving her for half an hour or so; she might have drifted away in that terrible sleep. But I dare not betray any suspicion before I was able to act. The drug was probably chloral, but it may have been something of a vegetable nature."

"Suppose you come and have a bit of dinner with me," remarked the house-surgeon, interestedly, "and tell me the balance of the yarn."

"Sorry," said Lucius Shand, "but I've got to go and report to the coroner and stop him sending out summonses for a jury to sit on a living person. If I could only get those two Lyles a term of penal, I'd be happy. But who the dickens could make anything of this case in the witness-box? I should be laughed out of court as a visionary. And though I believe Lyle himself could be swung for more than one crime, we should have to ask his daughter to convict him, which wouldn't be quite the thing."

Oddly enough, however, Lucius Shand's desire was fulfilled in an unexpected fashion, and both the Lyles went to penal servitude for a long term of years in connection with an atrocious manslaughter. Not only Joscelyn West but the police of two Southern counties had been searching for them. The crime was probably the only single one of all their manifold villainies which they had failed effectively to conceal.

The concluding story of this series, published next Tuesday, is entitled "The Affair in the Prince's Yacht." This will be followed by a brilliant series of true stories written by a lady's companion, and revealing many startling secrets of high life in London Society.

Should Women Wear Frilled Frocks?

In the interests of health, no! The superabundance of flimsy material tends to harbour disease germs, and therefore the plainer the costume the healthier. Some women, however, cannot wear skirts made of thick, heavy material, owing to attacks of dizziness, languor, and general weakness. The least weight is a burden to them and brings on these attacks. What are they to do? The answer is simple. As a remedy for the above complaints Bile Beans for Biliousness are unequalled. Try them. They also cure skin eruptions, pimples, blotches, and all blood impurities. The following case proves this. Rheumatic fever left Mrs. Elizabeth Hodgson, of 13 Boundary Street, Halliwell, Bolton, with heart-weakness and general debility; and nothing was able to cure her until she took a course of Bile Beans for Biliousness. In fact, more than once she was believed to be at death's door. To a *Bolton Journal* reporter who investigated the case, Mrs. Hodgson said: "I have worked as a weaver in Bolton Mills since I was thirteen. Ten years ago I had an awful attack of rheumatic fever. The fever left me with shortness of breath, and heart-weakness. My legs and hands were very much swollen, and I could not put my feet to the ground. Later on I was removed to Carlisle Infirmary and nobody expected me to come out alive. As many as seven doctors visited me one day, and some said I had heart-disease. Some time afterwards I was told I might as well leave as I should never be any better. My relatives and friends gave me up then. I became an out-patient at the Bolton Infirmary, but I did not get better, and I kept lingering on, as it were, between life and death.

If I attempted to walk upstairs at night I was so done up with the effort that I had to come back and sit by the fire all night. I dreaded nights coming. I could not eat, I was always short of breath, and work was quite out of the question. One day I took a few Bile Beans, and next morning I felt a great change. I was able to walk about and wash-up, and I felt quite refreshed, and for the first time for a long while I was able to sleep at night. At the week-end I got two boxes of Beans. I continued to take them until, after a comparatively short time, I felt thoroughly fit for work. All the people about were thoroughly amazed at the change in me. Now I have entirely got rid of my old complaints and feel as well as ever I did in my life. I can eat anything, sleep well, go up and down stairs without the slightest difficulty, and am weaving from morning till night, as I did before I had rheumatic fever." Bile Beans for Biliousness are an unfailing remedy for heart-weakness, debility, and the ill-effects of rheumatic and other fevers. They are also invaluable for palpitation, anæmia, sleeplessness, headache, piles, constipation, all female ailments, rheumatism, colds, liver-chill, and all liver and kidney disorders. All chemists stock them, or they may be obtained, post free, from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, E.C., by sending prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine. They are what women want.

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See-saw, Margery Daw.

A Charming Love Story in which Two Kittens Play a Prominent Part.

I had taken the house for two reasons. In the first place it had a beautiful garden, and in the second, the neighbourhood seemed fairly free from cats. My hobby is horticulture. Indeed, I contrive to make a very comfortable income out of my garden, for I specialise in roses, and have had the honour of introducing several new varieties.

Cats I always hated. They are such an unmitigated nuisance to a gardener. One goes to infinite trouble in sowing and watering. Then comes a time of watching and waiting whilst the springing seedlings grow into thriving plants. At last, just as one is expecting a reward for one's toil in the form of a display of bright blossoms, half a dozen beastly cats come over the wall at midnight and hold a concert right in the centre of the cherished bed. Of course everything is completely spoilt.

As I was saying, I took this particular house down at Demford because the district seemed comparatively free from these objectionable quadrupeds. I began work in great hope, and for a time my dream of freedom was unbroken. The early summer saw my garden gay with a grand display of many coloured blossoms, and my heart rejoiced. I was particularly proud of a bed of prize pansies, with which I had taken great pains. Pansies are quaint, pretty flowers, and I had brought together in that particular patch, blooms of almost every known colour and combination.

One morning I strolled into my garden to take the air before breakfast. I was not thinking of anything in particular, and I gazed upwards into the clear blue of the summer sky. Suddenly a slight sound drew my glance to earth. My eye fell upon my pansy bed—the pride of my heart. Right in the very centre of it, surrounded by broken plants and crushed flowers, two black Persian kittens were having a boxing match, while close by, in the middle of a great tuft of blue lobelia, sat the sedate old mother cat, applauding the antics of her progeny.

Fortunately the beasts had not yet become aware of my presence. With the stealth of a Red Indian, I crept back into the house, and went round to the little conservatory where I keep my big garden syringe. I returned quickly and silently, with the instrument charged to its fullest capacity with the special blight-killing preparation I use for my roses. Creeping down behind the yew hedge, I got as close to the pansy bed as possible. Then I took deliberate aim, and fired. The kittens were almost drowned, and the old mother cat came in for a very superior kind of ducking. It took the beasts a second or two to realise what had happened. Then they all went headlong over my neighbour's wall, followed by two good-sized flints that I had managed to kick out of the gravel.

The rout was satisfactory so far as it went. But the enemy was only driven off, and might return at any time. I decided that some more decisive step must be taken. I asked my housekeeper at breakfast who occupied the next door house. I was informed that the individual's name was Miss Daw—Miss Margery Daw. I pondered the matter all that morning, and by noon I had worked myself into a rage. Why should my gardening operations be brought to nought, just because a sour old spinster indulged an inordinate taste for beastly, black pussy cats? I asked myself this question a score of times, and I told myself that the thing was preposterous—absolutely monstrous.

So immediately after lunch I changed my garden coat, took my hat, and went round to call upon Miss Daw. The maid told me that the old dame was in the garden, and led me across the lawn to a shady corner where a hammock was slung amongst the trees. In the hammock reclined a lady whom I presumed was the redoubtable Miss Daw. I advanced with a determined look on my face, strong in the belief that I was a match for any number of old maids when it came to the pinch.

Miss Daw put down her book, and turned to look at me. I verily believe that I gasped. I am quite sure that my jaw dropped, and that I looked silly. For Miss Daw was not an old maid at all, but a very young and a very pretty maid. She had soft golden hair, and the loveliest violet eyes I had ever seen.

"How do you do, Mr. Crawford?" she asked, holding out her hand; "I am sure it is very kind of you to call. You will excuse me rising, won't you? It is so hot, and—well, hammocks are rather awkward things. Do sit down."

I murmured some commonplace, but I was too much overcome by surprise to collect fully my scattered thoughts. I collapsed into the chair Miss Daw indicated, and gazed helplessly at that young lady's trim little figure as it swung slowly to and fro in the hammock. Miss Margery evidently noticed my embarrassment. By way, I suppose, of starting a conversation, she asked:

"Excuse me, Mr. Crawford, but do you happen to know of a good soap for washing cats?"

I must have blushed to the roots of my hair, for she hastened to correct herself.

"I only mean that I want to get a lot of horrid, oily stuff off my two little kittens—Rub and Dub. They are the prettiest little things in the world—or rather, they were. But this morning when I came down to breakfast—oh! you can't think what a sight they were—all covered in disgusting slime. Fanny—that's my maid—and I have been washing them all day, but we can't get the stuff off anyhow. I thought perhaps you might be able to recommend something."

It was just at this moment that Dawson came down the garden. He is a clerk at the local bank, and I had met him on several previous occasions in the billiard room at the Bear Inn. He smiled at Miss Daw in a disgustingly familiar manner, and then nodded to me as though I were quite out of it. I remembered that I had often seen him entering my neighbour's house, but it had never occurred to me to seek a reason for his visits. Now I knew why he had called so often.

He did not seem at all well pleased at my presence. I noticed he kept scowling at me whenever he could turn his face away from Miss Daw. By and by that young lady began to talk of her cats again, and I saw Dawson prick up his ears.

"Cats?" he asked. "In a mess, did you say?"

Then he turned to me with a beastly grin of satisfaction.

"I think you know something about that, Crawford—eh, old man? Didn't I see you squirting those kittens with your syringe this morning?"

I blushed, and began to stammer some lame words of excuse.

"Don't shuffle," cried Dawson, maliciously. "My bedroom window overlooks your garden, and I was witness to the whole disgraceful affair as I stood shaving."

I ground my teeth with rage, but I was powerless to retaliate. In the eyes of the beautiful Miss Daw I knew that I must appear a scoundrel of the blackest dye. I stammered a few words of explanation, pleading the damage the kittens had wrought in my pansy bed. But the only answer I received was a cold look of scorn from those pretty violet eyes. Finally, when I rose to go, Miss Daw seemed to grudge me the handshake which convention demanded. Dawson left with me, grinning with satisfaction. At the gate he said:

"Well, ta-ta, old man. Funny you took so long to make the acquaintance of your neighbour. Nice little bit of goods, isn't she? Orphan—eighteen—coming in for a comfortable little fortune shortly."

Then he slapped me on the back, and continued:

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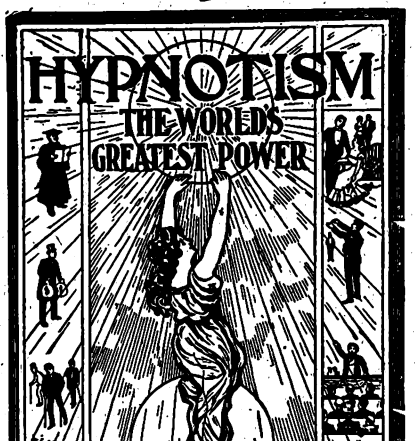

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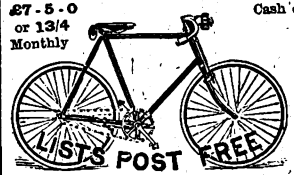

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"But you're too late, old fellow—don't you make any mistake about that! I'm going to marry Miss Daw. I'm the only one in the running. She has not actually promised yet, because she wants her freedom just at present. But I'm the only fellow she cares for—so no poaching, mind! Not that she'd take any notice of a bounder of your stamp, especially after that pussy cat affair."

Dawson chuckled loudly, and I turned away from him in disgusted wrath. Then he laid his hand on my shoulder, and whispered in my ear. I will not repeat his remark; suffice it to say that he spoke of Miss Daw, and that his language was coarse and vulgar. I turned upon him in a moment, and almost before I had time to think what I was doing, I had sent him sprawling into the dusty roadway. He rose snarling, but he was too much of a coward to close with me.

"Never mind, Crawford," he cried, with a foul oath. "It's he who laughs last who laughs loudest, you know. I'll be even with you for this some day."

I left him where he stood, and went into my house.

Two days later as I was gathering roses in my garden, I heard laughter and singing coming over the wall from my neighbour's premises. Miss Daw was evidently well pleased with herself and with the world in general. "See-Saw, Margery Daw," she sang; and I could not help wondering what all the gaiety was about.

At last I went away, and bringing back a ladder, set it against the wall. I assured myself that I had been meaning to trim the creeper all the month, but in my heart of hearts I knew quite well that I really wanted to get another glimpse of my neighbour's pretty face. I climbed up the ladder cautiously, and peeped through the twisted mass of clematis and virginian creeper which topped the wall. What I saw made me clench my fists.

Right in the middle of the lawn Miss Daw had improvised a see-saw, and she was making most vigorous use of this ingenious mechanical contrivance. But it was not the sight of Miss Daw enjoying herself in a somewhat unconventional manner which upset me. What set my teeth on edge was the fact that the individual at the other end of the rising and falling board was none other than that ass Dawson. I nearly fell off the ladder in my mad rage that such a beast should have so completely ingratiated himself with Miss Daw. I put out my hand and clutched at the twining creeper for support. In so doing, I made a good deal of rustling amongst the leaves. Dawson heard me, and looked up.

"Hullo, Crawford!" he cried. "On the look-out for more cats to sprinkle?"

I regarded him with a scowl, and remarked loftily that I was about to trim the creeper.

"Oh, Mr. Crawford," cried Miss Daw, eagerly; "please don't cut that creeper. It's just growing so nicely, and it makes such a nice screen. I do so hate to have things cut back just when they begin to thrive well. Really, you know, that creeper belongs to me quite as much as it does to you. It is on the division wall, you see."

"The root is on my side," I remarked, rather sourly.

Miss Daw looked at me shyly, with a most bewitching smile.

"Won't you leave that creeper alone to please me, Mr. Crawford?" she asked. "Come now, let us make a bargain. You made my kittens in a most horrible mess the other day. You had some excuse, because Rub and Dub had been playing in your pansy bed. I looked over the wall after you had told me about it, and the pansies were really quite spoilt. Still, you made me very angry by messing my pussies so."

"Really—really, I'm most awfully sorry," I pleaded. "I did not know until afterwards that the kittens belonged to you."

Miss Daw held up her little forefinger to point her remarks.

"Look here," she began; "I'll promise to forgive and forget all about your unkindness to my kittens, if you will promise to let that creeper grow all through the summer."

All this time, Miss Daw and that ass Dawson had been poised one at each end of the gently swaying see-saw. When Miss Daw had finished speaking, she looked at me through half-closed eyelids in such a quaint way that I had no choice but to do as she asked.

"I promise," I said.

Dawson broke into an ugly chuckle.

"Until next time!" he cried rudely.

Miss Daw sprang lightly down from her end of the see-saw, and at the same moment Dawson came to the ground with a resounding bump. As he was quite unprepared for the catastrophe, the result was really most deplorable. He picked himself up ruefully, whilst Miss Daw laughed at his discomfort.

"That was a shabby trick to serve a fellow!" he cried, angrily.

"I really could not help it, you know," said Miss Daw, sarcastically. "I was so much surprised when you threw doubt on Mr. Crawford's word that I jumped off almost without thinking."

"I'll teach you manners one of these days," growled Dawson.

Miss Margery dropped him a mock curtsey.

"Perhaps you'll never have the chance," she cried, laughing.

Dawson mumbled something which I could not catch. I fancy it was an oath. Miss Daw stamped her foot.

"You are very rude," she said. "Please go away, and don't come back until you have learnt manners."

Dawson went slowly out of the garden, muttering to himself in an ugly manner. When he had slammed the gate behind him, Miss Daw looked up at me.

"That man's a thorough cad," she said; "I hate him."

"Then why ever do you encourage him," I asked, in surprise.

Miss Daw hung her head in such a manner that her big sun hat hid her face from me.

"I don't," she answered bluntly.

"But," said I, "I saw you playing see-saw with him only a moment ago. If that's not encouraging a man, I don't know what is."

"It was not to encourage him. It was to—to—*encourager les autres*, as the French say."

"To encourage the others—I see," I cried, with a smile. "But surely," I added, "the others would have come without—without—that kind of encouragement?"

"Not the one I wanted," said Miss Daw, very softly.

I nearly tumbled off the wall in my excitement.

"Margery," I said, gently.

"Yes, dear—for ever and ever so long," she answered, still hanging her head.

"What a fool I've been," I cried. "Why—I thought you hated me because I doused your kittens."

Margery lifted her eyes to mine, and I think the violet was dimmed by happy tears. Then she stretched out her arms.

"Won't you come now?" she asked.

I jumped off the wall into a sweet briar bush, but I did not notice the scratching I got until hours later. **A. H. B.**

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[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of Short Stories.*]*

Giggling.

"Embarrassed" is a young man of twenty, who has a kind of idea that he is not bad looking. At the same time, whenever he meets girls in the streets they start giggling. He has endured this so long that he has become desperate, and writes to me for an explanation of the problem "Why do girls giggle?" Is it, he asks, because they see something ridiculous in his appearance, or out of sheer intellectual emptiness? Well, "Embarrassed," it may be a little of both. Perhaps there *is* something in your appearance which is funny—I don't say to the world at large, but to the average girl. Girls are very observant of the merest trifles in a man's dress or appearance, and if they can possibly fix on some object, say an open mouth, a fixed grin, an unshaven face, or perhaps an unusual hat or tie, they are unconsciously driven to laughter.

❦❦❦

Perhaps "Embarrassed" is not always free from something of the kind. On the other hand, I must say many girls giggle without the slightest reason. This is not always due to "intellectual emptiness," but to "nervous fulness." The giggle with a girl is largely akin to hysterics. They often do it and are quite unconscious of any cause. Sometimes even serious things affect them in this way, and I have known the most gentle-hearted girls burst out laughing when people are talking of the death of a relative or some other subject the reverse of frivolous. Giggling is a nervous reaction after one has been strung up, so "Embarrassed" must not be too sensitive about it on the part of young girls. They grow out of it in time. However, if I were he, I should take an opportunity of telling them, if he knows the girls in question, that the habit is very silly, and perhaps they may see it for themselves if he puts it to them in a dignified way.

❦❦❦

A Stolen Husband.

I have had a very long and pathetic letter from "Clues" (Southsea), whose husband has been made love to by a hospital nurse. The affair has been going on for some time, and though "Clues" knows they are fond of one another, she is sure there is no faithlessness on his part. Their present life is one of misery, but she is certain he would be happy with her if the other woman were out of the way. How can the affair be terminated?

❦❦❦

I can only suggest that, under the circumstances, my correspondent should invite her husband to either terminate once for all his association with the other lady, or consent to her placing the matter in the hands of a lawyer, with a view to proceedings for a deed of separation.

I knew just such a case as this years ago, only the wavering one was in this case the wife, not the husband. The husband had known for a long time of his wife's devotion to another man, but was so fond of her himself, that he even felt a sympathy with her, and a desire to grant her her wishes. He suggested a deed of separation, and the two signed it in a solicitor's office. She stopped with her mother for a week after the signature, when she relented and returned to him, admitting that she had been absolutely wrong, and that his own conduct had been so chivalrous that it had touched her heart. They have since lived together in unbroken matrimonial happiness.

❦❦❦

Playing Gooseberry.

"Ena" has been staying with a friend, and is called upon to be continually playing "gooseberry." That is to say, the friend, Amy, is receiving attentions from a young man, but Amy's parents never allow her to go out unless "Ena" accompanies her. They have a kind of suspicion that the young man has a little way of placing himself in the way of meeting her when he gets the chance, which is perfectly true. He has. How should "Ena" act when they meet him, and both indicate by hints that they wish to be alone?

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If "Ena" thinks that the attachment is quite innocent, and that the couple are really fond of each other, she should play "gooseberry" in a sportsmanlike way. It is quite possible for her to be with them and yet, so to speak, not with them. Supposing they are in a country lane, and the young man overtakes them, what is to prevent "Ena" suddenly discovering an intensely interesting plant or flower, and tarrying behind to examine it and make deductions? Or, why could she not take with her an interesting book, and when the couple find themselves together, she might walk at a safe distance, urging that she is really so absorbed in the story that she hopes they will not mind her reading. There are several ways of playing "gooseberry" without being a nuisance

❦❦❦

The Dear Old Ladies.

"Evelyn" is a very pretty girl, but does not quite see why this should be taken as a pretext by old ladies for inundating her with insane conversations at dances, parties, or concerts. At a recent concert she wished to hear the music, but a dear old lady on her left persisted in talking to her on uninteresting topics, out of apparent desire to patronise her. How should she act? If rude to the lady she must offend her parents, but if polite she has to endure this sort of thing indefinitely. I am sorry for "Evelyn," but must tell her that for the present, at any rate, she must bear gently with the dear old ladies. These gentle creatures have an idea that it is their bounden duty to talk nicely to a young girl, and, as they mean well, it is not right or discreet for "Evelyn" to offend them.

❦❦❦

There is a way of appearing to be interested in conversation without having to be a real partaker in it, and this all young girls should gracefully cultivate. When an elderly lady starts in this manner, "Evelyn" should wear her sweetest smile, and should answer each remark with a "yes" "no," "really," or "you don't mean it?" expressed in terms of intense interest. It is quite easy to become proficient at this in time, and "Evelyn" should practise it. Old ladies must not on any account be offended by their juniors. They mean well.

❦❦❦

Love's Signature.

"A. S." is seventeen, but years ago had made a vow with a young man that she would be his wife. Later on he made her sign a letter stating that she would always be faithful to him, and that if he died, she would never marry another. When she asked him to sign a similar statement he refused. Does this suggest that his love for her is not as durable as hers for him? He is, I should add, twenty-four years of age. It does certainly look as though he were willing to bind another to an agreement but not be bound himself. I should tell him, "A. S.," that you withdraw your written statement unless he agrees to make another on his own account. One can always supersede a declaration by another. At the same time, I do not think it argues much for his belief in you for him to insist on your signing such a statement. The knot of true love should not require a pen and ink statement that it is tied, as it should be one of those things that admit of no doubt.

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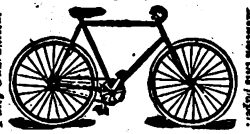

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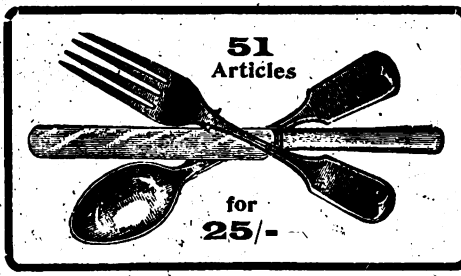

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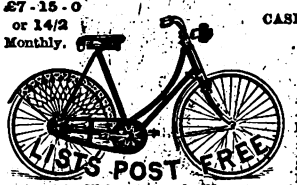

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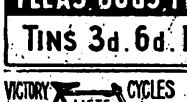

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If you are a new reader, this summary of the preceding instalments will give you the thread of the story.

JOHN MANSFIELD, a wealthy banker, Esther, his only child, Alec Scarsdale, his confidential clerk, and Seaton Revelle, a gentleman who had made the banker's acquaintance on the Continent, are seated together under the verandah of Mr. Mansfield's house, partaking of afternoon tea.

"It's an extraordinary thing that even in the privacy of one's home one can't get away from business," the banker was remarking. "Only this afternoon an utter stranger called upon me—a bearded, sunburnt fellow, just home from South Africa. . . . and took from round his waist a money-belt stuffed with bank-notes and diamonds, and wanted me to take charge of it. . . . He was so persistent that I agreed to lock the belt in my safe and return it to him on Monday."

The stranger informed the banker that he had made the pile in four years.

"Extraordinary!" said Seaton Revelle, "It will probably take him less than four years to spend it. Easily won, they say, easily lost."

Shortly afterwards Revelle writes a letter to a Benjamin Beard in London, which he posts himself. During his absence, Alec Scarsdale, who is treated by the banker almost as his own son, tells Mr. Mansfield of his love for Esther, and, with tears in his eyes, the old man gives the pair his fondest blessing.

That same evening, Esther and Alec go for a walk in the beautiful woods which are situated close to "The Woodlands," Mr. Mansfield's house. Their loving embraces are watched by Revelle, who silently chuckles as he thinks of the change which will shortly take place as a consequence of this important letter to London.

The next afternoon there is another meeting in the woods. This time between Seaton Revelle and a gentleman from London named Benjamin Beard. A whispered conversation takes place, and a little packet of powder passes into Revelle's possession.

"Half of that, Marquis, is quite sufficient to induce sleep," says Benny. A few more confidences, then, "Ta-ta, Marquis, till to-night." Revelle answers "Till to-night, Benny."

Later in the evening Mr. Mansfield, Scarsdale, and Revelle are seated in the smoking-room, enjoying cigars.

"Alec," said the banker, "it's about time I had my night-cap. Be a good fellow and mix it for me—you know my dose."

Scarsdale mixes drinks for all three.

A few minutes later, Revelle manages to drop some powder into the banker's glass.

"Well, gentlemen," presently remarks the banker, "I don't know how you feel, but I'm feeling remarkably sleepy. I say, Alec, what have you been doing with the whisky? It's left a curious taste in my mouth."

"I don't know. Mine tasted right enough," replied Scarsdale.

"My imagination, perhaps, or else I've over-smoked myself."

Late that night a figure cycles up to "The Woodlands," and waits below the dining-room windows.

Suddenly the window is noiselessly opened. "The old man's sleeping like a log, I've got the key." The voice was Revelle's and his listener Benny. Quietly the two men steal to the safe, unlock it, and extract the belt. Just then, Benny, in his excitement, knocks over a vase, and almost immediately footsteps are heard descending the stairs. An instant later, and Scarsdale, fully dressed, enters the room with a candle. But a tremendous blow from Revelle knocks him senseless.

"Go, Benny, go!" Revelle urges, "ride like the devil, I'm going to raise the alarm—it's my only chance."

To put the key in Scarsdale's hand, and the remaining half of the powder in his waistcoat pocket is the work of a moment. While Revelle is still bending over Scarsdale's prostrate body, the servants rush in, alarmed by Revelle's shouts. "One's escaped, but I've got the other," cries Seaton Revelle.

It was past four o'clock in the morning when Scarsdale was marched to the police-station, Esther alone believing him innocent, although the key and powder were found in his possession.

Next day the crime is the one topic of conversation in the district. In the "Crown and Cushion" no doubt is entertained that Scarsdale is guilty, but where is the other man?

Just then a stranger enters and the landlord eyes him suspiciously and secretly sends for the police. Two stalwart young constables arrive. One of them taps the stranger on the shoulder. The stranger looks up and his eyes sparkle with pleasure.

"Freddie!" he cried. "Well I never! So they've drafted you down here!"

"Uncle!" cried the young constable; then laughed loudly.

"Goodman," he continued, addressing the landlord, "do you know who this suspicious person is? He is Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard!"

It was indeed the genial and able little detective who, now on the retired list, had come down to make a few inquiries for his personal satisfaction, prior to attending the great trial in London.

SEATON REVELLE

Meanwhile, a new character appears on the scene. This is police-constable, Tom Jackson, once an employé at Mr. Mansfield's bank, whom Scarsdale had saved from becoming a thief in a moment of temptation. He resolves to do what little he can to redeem his debt of gratitude, so manages to visit Scarsdale in prison, and to convey short notes from Alec to Esther, protesting his innocence, and Esther's answer, swearing that nothing shall shake her love and her belief.

The great trial comes on. Mr. Mansfield and Seaton Revelle are of course present to give evidence. Mr. Crump is also there, a retiring figure in the gallery. Not far from him sits Benny, whose anxiety compells him to come and listen to the evidence. Everything is against Scarsdale. Revelle never falters in his lying evidence. The jury retire, but quickly return and give their verdict as "Guilty." The judge turns to the prisoner and asks him if he has anything to say why sentence should not be passed.

"Only this, my lord, I am innocent. Sooner or later, I believe the truth will come to light, and you will find you have condemned an innocent man. Sooner or later"—and his eyes flashed towards Seaton Revelle—"I believe that those who have tried to ruin me will be brought to justice."

The judge then summed up, concluding with, "Alexander Scarsdale, the sentence of this court is that you be sent to penal servitude for sixteen years!"

There was a burst of applause from the court. Scarsdale turned towards the pitiless sea of faces. Suddenly he fixed his eyes wildly upon a certain spot in the gallery, and pointing to a crouching figure seated there, shrieked, "There, there—that man, that man. Let him speak, let him prove my innocence!"

Almost simultaneously with his action, Crump turned his head sharply round.

CHAPTER VIII. *(continued).*

LIKE some drowning man, who, swept along by an eddying resistless torrent, clutches an overhanging branch, clings to it for a moment with despairing hope, so Scarsdale, seeing that face, had seized upon what seemed a last desperate chance of salvation!

Those in the well of the court, who had swung round and were staring up at the gallery, only saw a white, swaying blurr of human faces; but to Scarsdale that one face stood out distinct, like a thing apart.

Crump's brain had worked like lightning. This was no acting, no effort to produce a cheap effect! Even as he turned his head, he drew an imaginary line from the quivering, accusing finger of the prisoner in the dock to the gallery. It might have been pointed at himself; it certainly seemed to indicate the row in which he was sitting. Swiftly, comprehensively he swept the faces of those around him. If the man were present, unless he were possessed of an almost superhuman power of self-control, he must betray some emotion, some outward sign of shock.

And there was one face, not so very far away from him, that betrayed something more than wonder and astonishment—a clean-shaven, sharp-featured face, a grey tinge of terror upon it! As Crump's brain took an instantaneous, indelible photograph of that face, the man swung round, and scanned the features of those behind him, presenting his back to the prisoner in the dock!

It was all a matter of seconds.

Before Scarsdale could repeat his words, the warders flung themselves upon him. Those in the court who had turned, swung round again and concentrated their gaze on the dock. There was a short, sharp struggle. Scarsdale had gripped the ledge of the dock with one hand. A warder knocked it up. The crowd heard a passionate cry; saw three figures confusedly swaying together; then prisoner and warders disappeared down the steps leading to the passage below.

Never in the annals of the Old Bailey had a sensational trial a more sensational ending than that of Alexander Scarsdale, found guilty of burglary under most aggravated circumstances, and sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude.

It was all over now!

Seaton Revelle drew in a deep breath, like a man from whose soul a great load had been lifted. The crisis was passed—so he fancied, knowing nothing of a certain homely little man who was wedged tightly away in the gallery. Inwardly he reviled Benny Beard—he knew well enough whose face it was, that Scarsdale had seen—for the criminal folly of having ventured into court. He had expressly given him instructions to keep out of the way for a time. But "All's well that ends well!" The burglary, now that the law had been satisfied, would cease to attract attention. The rival, who had barred the way to a certain ambitious scheme which had taken shape in his brain, was removed. No need now to worry further about Alec Scarsdale. Sixteen years' penal servitude! He smiled softly to himself as he mingled with the throng that was fighting its way out of the court. He found himself rubbing shoulders with John Mansfield. The banker was looking haggard and worn. The strain of that day had been almost unbearable. Esther, feverish and ill with suspense—she had yet to learn the sentence—was awaiting him at Warham. Outside the court, Revelle held out his hand sympathetically.

"It's been a terrible business!" he said.

"My poor girl!" whispered the old man unsteadily. "My poor girl! I dread meeting her! She believes in him still—loves him still!"

"Let's hope," said Revelle, "that time will bring forgetfulness. I can't express my sympathy in words!"

"I shall take Esther away. A change perhaps will help her to forget. You must come and see us when we come back, Revelle!"

Revelle shook his head.

"I'm afraid that Miss Mansfield has not forgiven me my unwilling share in this business!"

"Ah! But you mustn't judge her by what happened the other day. She was not conscious of what she was doing or saying!"

"I wish I could think that!"

Revelle spoke the words with some emotion, and suppressed a sigh.

"I wish," he went on, "that you would express for me to Miss Mansfield how deeply I feel my position. I—I would give all I possess to have been miles away from the place when it all happened. But, as it was, what else could I have done?"

"I will indeed!"

The banker hailed a cab; then again shook hands with Seaton Revelle, *alias* the Marquis.

No sooner had the prisoner disappeared from the dock, than a regular stampede had occurred in the gallery of the court.

It was not so long ago that Crump had told a young constable at Warham that his day was over, that he had permanently retired from business; but the training and habits of a life-time are not easily eradicated. In the days of his active service, his undoubted success had been due not only to remarkable deductive and logical powers and indomitable pluck, but also to a comprehensive knowledge of, and power to gauge, human nature. He took a broad, humane view of life. Years of contact with crime and criminals had *not* hardened his heart in the slightest, nor dulled his kindly spirit. Sympathy, abstract sympathy, for Esther Mansfield,

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had caused him to take an interest in Scarsdale's case. Here was a young man of good character, in a good position, and engaged to a charming girl! The prosecution had been unable to bring forward any evidence to show that he had been in financial trouble, addicted to gambling or any vice in secret. He had been condemned on direct as well as circumstantial evidence; but the direct evidence depended on one man. Had Crump been in charge of the case, he would have investigated that man's past history very thoroughly—out of fairness to the prisoner; those who had been in charge seemed to have concentrated their efforts solely on proving Scarsdale guilty. The dramatic scene that had closed the trial had impressed Crump immensely. It had been so absolutely spontaneous on Scarsdale's part. Moreover, the sharp-featured, clean-shaven face that Crump had seen, a grey tinge of terror upon it, answered to the description that Scarsdale had given of the man he had seen standing by the open safe.

"I'm going to follow that fellow!" said Crump to himself, forgetting, for the moment, that his day was over, and that he had permanently retired from the business!

Then the stampede!

Benny Beard, nearer the doorway, was out first. As Crump reached the entrance, a woman fainted. The outward flow was checked. Crump found himself jammed in, unable to move. When, ultimately, he did reach the street, the crowd outside had swallowed up the man he wanted.

"Most annoying!" he said to himself, shaking his head. "Of course I may be quite wrong in my assumption that he was the man that Scarsdale indicated, yet of all the faces that I scrutinised, his was the one that exhibited terror—real terror, as contrasted with astonishment and wonder. This affair is beginning to trouble me, trouble me very much indeed!"

He moved away quietly.

"I suppose," he reflected, "that it is a vast piece of impertinence on my part; but, in spite of the verdict of the jury, intelligent men, and the summing-up of the judge, I am beginning to have grave doubts as to Scarsdale's guilt!"

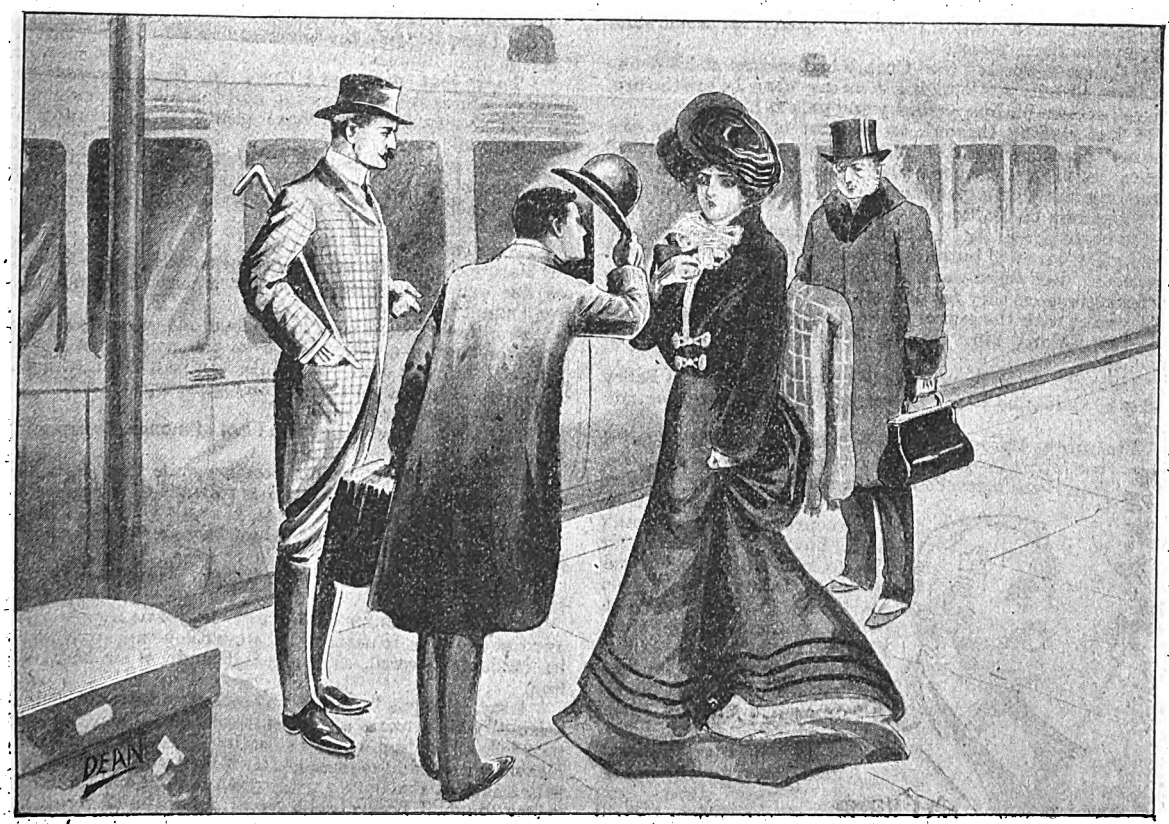
The flesh round his small, keen eyes puckered up, causing innumerable wrinkles to form.

He climbed on to the top of a 'bus. In the Strand he alighted, and made his way to a quiet, old-fashioned family hotel in one of the side streets that lead down to the Embankment. He lingered some time over the tea and toast that he ordered; then, presently, he shook a forefinger at an empty chair opposite.

"I know, my dear fellow, I know! This is absolutely nothing to do with me. I am on the shelf, and far abler men than myself have gone into the case very thoroughly, but, notwithstanding, if I have arrived, rightly or wrongly, at the conclusion that there may have been a grave miscarriage of justice—and I regret to say that it would by no means be the first time that I have known such a grievous thing to happen—would it not be a very selfish, cowardly act on my part, to go back to my delightful little place in the country, deliberately ignoring the dictates of my conscience, while conscience tells me in a very loud voice that it is my duty as a man to go into this matter very thoroughly!"

Crump paused for a few moments as if he were giving the imaginary individual in the chair opposite an opportunity to reply.

"I assure you, my dear fellow, that from a personal, selfish point of view, I infinitely prefer the quiet of the country,



Esther drew in her breath quickly, as she caught sight of his face. It was the face of the photograph!

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the pleasures of my garden, and the society of my good friends, old and young; but a man is under certain unwritten, but sacred obligations to his fellow-creatures!"

Crump paused to fill his tea-cup.

"No, my dear fellow, there you are quite wrong! It isn't conceit on my part or because I fancy that I'm a very clever fellow who knows better than everybody else; but simply because my conscience tells me that, feeling as strongly as I do on this matter, it would be very cowardly on my part to stand by and do nothing! Therefore, I shall go into the matter!"

He sipped his tea.

"Ah, yes, I may be hopelessly wrong—that doesn't make the slightest difference. If I prove myself to have been wrong, nevertheless, I shall have done the right thing!"

He started to fill his pipe.

"And now, having made up my mind, I must begin at the beginning. I shall be visiting Warham again shortly!"

CHAPTER IX.

In which Seaton Revelle Explains his Intentions to Benjamin Beard.

When in London, Seaton Revelle occupied a handsome suite of rooms in Bond Street.

On the same evening that Crump had arrived at his determination, Revelle was lounging in an easy chair before the fire, a cigar between his lips, a whisky and soda at his elbow.

He was reading through an account of the trial in the evening paper, when his manservant—a quiet, noiseless person, with an expressionless face—entered, with the announcement that a gentleman wished to speak to him.

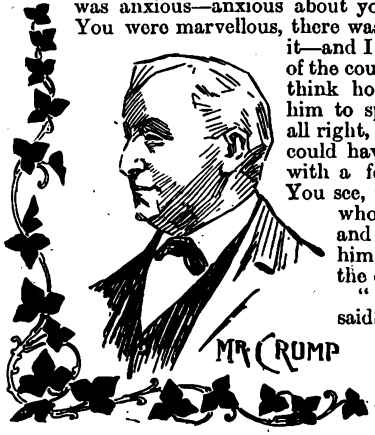
"Show him in, Railton."

A moment later, Mr. Benjamin Beard, neatly dressed, and looking like a man of business, or a well-to-do solicitor, entered the room. But there was a certain look of uneasiness about his ferrety eyes as they fell on Seaton Revelle.

The valet with the expressionless face glided out and closed the door behind him. Seaton Revelle turned sharply in his chair.

"What the deuce do you mean by going to the Old Bailey to-day? Confound it all, I thought you had more common sense."

"I'm sorry, Marquis," replied Benny, humbly; "but I was anxious—anxious about you and your evidence. You were marvellous, there was no picking holes in it—and I was right at the back of the court. Even now I can't think how it was possible for him to spot me. But it was all right, Marquis, though you could have knocked me down with a feather at the time. You see, no one could tell at whom he was pointing, and the warders whipped him pretty smartly out of the dock."



"Look here, Benny," said Seaton Revelle, slowly, "next time you disobey orders, there'll be trouble. I'm not a man of many words, you know what I mean. Now mix yourself a drink, and take a cigar."

Benny, evidently thankful at being let off so lightly, helped himself to the whisky with a sigh of relief.

"And now, Marquis," he said, deferentially, "might I be so bold as to ask your plans. Will you be wanting my services?"

Seaton Revelle contemplated the blue smoke that curled upwards from his cigar.

"I'm going to settle down at Warham presently. There's a nice little place to let there that'll just suit me. I shall take it fairly easy at first. And, now that I'm in funds, I shall be able to indulge in my old hobby!"

His eyes brightened with a light of enthusiasm.

"Ballooning?" questioned Benny.

"Yes!"

"You're a marvel!" ejaculated Benny, "though I'm bothered if I can see where the fascination of it comes in. The very thought of it makes my head swim. No, let me stick down below. *Terra firma's* good enough for me, thank you very much, all the same!"

Revelle threw back his head, and stared up at the ceiling.

"Fascination? My good Benny! To me there's no sensation in the world that can come near it. 'Pon my soul! I sometimes regret the old life. It was deuced risky; but it was worth it!"

The man's eyes were fairly glowing now. He had spoken the last words more to himself than to his companion.

"Marquis," said Benny, looking at him blankly, "what are you talking about?"

"Never mind! I'd gone back into the past before—before I knocked across you, Benny!"

The silence that followed was broken by Benny.

"But I say, Marquis, the funds won't last for ever—specially if you go in for hobbies!"

"I know that, my good fellow; but there are some fine country houses round Warham, and I shall be mixing with the best society, and shall have plenty of opportunity for observation."

"What," whispered Benny, excitedly, and lapsing into the vernacular of the cracksman, "settle down as a country gentleman, hob-nob with the toffs, and then crack their cribs for them!"

"Precisely."

"Marquis," said Benny, rather nervously, "you'll run it too fine one of these days. You're a marvel, I know, but you'll run it too fine!"

Seaton Revelle leant back in his chair and gave a low laugh.

"I don't fail as a rule. However, you needn't get worried just yet. I shan't start yet awhile. In fact, it might not be necessary. I might get married and turn respectable."

"What—what—you marry?"

"Why not? A pretty girl and lots of money, a man might do worse."

And Seaton Revelle gave a peculiar smile that showed his white teeth—a smile not altogether pleasant to witness.

"It isn't the banker's girl, is it, Marquis?" gasped Benny, "the girl who was engaged to the fellow you've put away to-day!"

"You are too inquisitive, friend Benny; wait and see!"

Benny stared blankly at the fire. For some time he puffed away at his cigar in silence. Then, without apparent reason, he suddenly shivered, as if a cold draught of air had struck him.

"I say, Marquis"—there was a slight unsteadiness in his voice—"sixteen years is an awful stretch. When I saw that poor fellow standing, white as death, in the dock, I wished to Heaven we could have managed it without that. I know what prison means, I've done a five stretch myself, and though I'm pretty tough, it nearly broke me." Again he shivered. "If he gets remission of time for good conduct, he'll be out in twelve years. Twelve years of it, and five nearly did for me!"

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There was evidently a draught blowing from somewhere, for Benny drew nearer to the fire, and having poured out half a tumbler of raw spirit, gulped it down.

"I didn't know you were so philanthropic"—Seaton Revelle's manner had changed, and there was a hidden snarl in his voice—"do you want to take his place, then? It might be managed yet."

"Here, Marquis, no larks!" said Benny, as his ferrety eyes dilated with a look of momentary terror, "I know it was him or us, and he had to go, but I'm sorry for him. To a man of his sort, penal servitude's worse than a death sentence. I remember when I was on the Moor, there was a young fellow——"

"Stop that," snapped Seaton Revelle, "I don't want any of your confounded broad-arrow reminiscences."

"All right, Marquis, all right. But you needn't be so short! I say, once I thought the prisoner would clear the dock and get at you. Marquis, if ever Scarsdale comes out, it'll be a bad business if he comes across you or me!"

Seaton Revelle laughed.

"We've got twelve years at least before that happens, Benny. Lots of things may take place before then."

And he stared at the glowing ash of his cigar.

"I'm going down to Warham to-morrow to see about that place. When I'm fixed up you must come and stay with me. But I shan't settle down there just yet; for a while it will be just as well if we don't see too much of one another; give this business time to blow over. In the meantime, Benny, try—er—to cultivate a rather more aristocratic manner. They are a 'touchy' lot down there, and you'll have to live up to them."

Benny bowed his head submissively, and inwardly determined to buy a handbook on etiquette.

"I say, Marquis," he said, after a pause; "where did you pick up that servant of yours? I fancied I'd seen his face before. I don't care much about it. Is he all right?"

"Railton," said Seaton Revelle, slowly, "is as faithful as a dog. And so he ought to be."

"Why?"

"Because," answered Seaton Revelle, "well, I did him a good turn once. Do you remember the Hancaster jewel robbery? It was some years back!"

"Yes, I do," replied Benny, "it was a big business, the mystery of the Dunnavon murder was mixed up with it. Detective Crump—he must have been a smart fellow, Marquis—was on the job. I don't mind owning up that, though I never had any dealings with him, I felt a kind of relief when I read of his retirement. One of the best men The Yard ever had. He left behind him a gap that has never been filled up, I am thankful to say! But go on, Marquis, what about this servant of yours?"

"Well, there was a fellow called Tomlinson who was mixed up in the Hancaster business. He got seven years. When he came out, he managed to get himself into a nasty fix. I pulled him out of the fire. Well, Railton's Tomlinson. But this is entirely between ourselves. He's completely lost his nerve; but he can be very useful sometimes."

Benjamin Beard was conscious of a slight twinge of jealousy.

"Well," he said, a little sullenly, "as you think it advisable to keep clear of one another for a bit, I shall take myself off for a bit of a holiday on the Continong. And you?"

"I shall see about this place at Warham, and then—well, I can't quite say, my movements will depend on circumstances!"

When, after some further conversation, Benny took his departure, Revelle half lay back in his chair, wrapped in deep meditation. He flattered himself that he had made a very favourable impression on John Mansfield. He had an infinite belief in his powers where women were concerned. It would take time, of course, but the banker's only daughter, both for herself and her prospects, was well worth waiting for. His future movements would largely depend on Esther Mansfield's.

But when, presently, he rose and stretched himself, he was not thinking of Esther Mansfield, but another woman.

"I wonder," he muttered thoughtfully, "I wonder what's become of her?"

CHAPTER X.

How Esther Mansfield Made the Acquaintance of Mr. Crump.

Sixteen years' penal servitude!

In the wood that overlooked Warham reservoir, on the felled tree on which, but a brief while ago, Alec Scarsdale had sat beside her, whispering of his love, Esther Mansfield now sat alone. Her hands were tightly clasped together, her head bowed. For a long while she did not stir. Then she shivered, and a low moan whispered out from her white lips.

Sixteen years!

Mute, hopeless agony shone from her tearless eyes. And he was innocent. Her heart cried out that he was innocent! Oh, the horror of it all! God willing, when the long years had passed, he should find her waiting for him, her love undimmed—but sixteen years! Could nothing be done? In some way could she not fight for him?

On the morrow she was going away. She rose to her feet mechanically, and cast a last glance round at the scene that recalled so much to her; then turned away wearily, hopelessly.

When she reached the house a maid-servant opened the door. Her face was unfamiliar to Esther. It was a pale face from which a former prettiness seemed to have been washed out. All the blood seemed to have gone from it, and all the life from the eyes. The hair was streaked with grey, though the woman's figure suggested youth.

"Yes, miss?" she said in a tuneless voice.

Then Esther remembered that Mrs. Tilley, the housekeeper, had consulted her about engaging a new parlour-maid.

"Are you—are you Vance?" she questioned.

"Yes, miss. I beg your pardon, but I didn't realise that you were Miss Mansfield!"

And the faded woman with grey hair and lifeless eyes stepped meekly on one side.

"Has Mr. Mansfield returned yet?" asked Esther.

"No, miss, but a person has called and asked to see Mr. Mansfield, and then asked if he could speak with you, miss. He is waiting in the library."

Esther hesitated. She was feeling in no mood to see people, but she bravely told herself that she must not shirk her responsibilities.

"Did he give his name?"

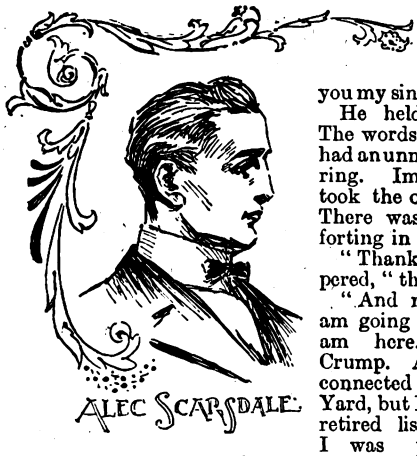
"No, miss."

Esther moved away to the dining-room. The new parlour-maid followed her with her dull, lifeless eyes; then, with a sigh, glided away quietly.

As Esther entered the dining-room, a little grey-haired man, who had been studying with obvious admiration the smooth lawn and the beautifully kept flower-beds upon which the windows looked, turned. Vance, the new parlour-maid, had described him as a person. She had been uncertain in her mind whether the term "gentleman," would have applied. As a matter-of-fact, his rather homely appearance covered a very perfect gentleman. His small eyes rested for a moment on Esther's grief-stained face, and perceptibly softened with a look of sympathy. Then something like an expression of embarrassment crossed the homely face.

"You wished to see me?" said Esther.

"I do, Miss Mansfield, and first of all, I'm going to ask you to forgive me intruding at a—at a painful time like this. I trust that you won't look upon it as a piece of impertinence



on my part, a complete stranger to you, but may I first of all offer you my sincere sympathy ?"

He held out his hand. The words, spoken quietly, had an unmistakably genuine ring. Impulsively Esther took the outstretched hand. There was something comforting in its grip.

"Thank you," she whispered, "thank you !"

"And now," he said, "I am going to tell you why I am here. My name is Crump. At one time I was connected with Scotland Yard, but I have been on the retired list for some time. I was present at Mr. Scarsdale's trial in London, you know !"

Esther drew in a sharp breath. Her white face flushed with a thrill of vague hope. She eagerly scanned the little man's homely face.

"You—you—have found out something, something that points to his innocence ? He is innocent, I know he's innocent !"

Crump coughed.

"Yes," he said quickly, and holding up his hand as if to warn her of the inevitable "but" that was to come, "I have made a little discovery that, to me, points to his innocence ; but—but it is not proof as yet. If I did not believe that there had been a miscarriage of justice, I should not be here now ; but the world asks for more than belief—it wants proof. I am going to do my best to obtain that proof. I am going to ask you, Miss Mansfield, to help me !"

"Do you mean that ?" she whispered, with an almost fierce intensity, "I have longed to be able to do something for his sake !"

Then, with a swift movement, she took one of his hands between her own.

"You have brought me hope. God bless you for that !"

Crump's eyes seemed to lose some of their brightness.

"But," he said very gently, "we shall have to be very, very patient. It must be a long up-hill game for both of us. Now, now, I don't want to discourage, dishearten you ; but we must face facts without shirking !"

"Tell me," whispered Esther, "what you want me to do ? I want to start at once !"

"That's brave of you !" said the little man. "Now, first I am going to ask you to keep quiet on the subject of this visit of mine. I had intended to see your father ; but it is better as it is. In my old days of active service I found it the best policy to keep well in the background. Next I am going to ask you a few questions ; then I should like, if possible, to go over the ground of the burglary—without attracting attention in the household, if you could contrive that for me ; and then I will give you one or two simple instructions for the future. Now, let me see !" he fumbled in a pocket and drew out a leather case, "I suppose you've known Mr. Seaton Revelle for a long time ?"

He asked the question quite casually as he searched for something in his case.

"Nearly three years !"

"Ah !"

"And you made his acquaintance——"

"My father met him abroad."

"Ah ! And now I must ask you a delicate question. Has he ever paid you anything more than the usual attentions that a gentleman would pay a lady ?"

"No !" answered Esther in a low voice.

Crump had taken a photograph from his case.

"You have met several of his personal friends, I suppose ?"

"Yes, at different times."

He handed the photograph to Esther.

"Is that by any chance the likeness of a friend of his ?"

It was an unmounted photograph, on the back of which were pencilled certain facts.

"I don't know the face," answered Esther.

"Ah ! Now, will you look at that face very carefully, Miss Mansfield, and commit it to memory. It may be a matter of importance at some future date. If at any time you should come across the owner of that face, I am going to ask you to let me know at once. Look at it very closely, please !" He smiled softly. "You mustn't mind if I am a little dictatorial, my dear young lady ! The owner of that face is a man of about my own height. His eyes, a grey-blue colour."

Esther stared intently at the photograph. New life seemed to have been infused into her.

"Yes !" she said, "I should recognise it anywhere now !"

"And now," said Crump, "I'm going to set you a very hard task, I fancy. I want you to cultivate the friendship of Mr. Seaton Revelle !"

Esther shuddered.

"You suspect him ?"

"I am very anxious to find out all I can about him," was Crump's diplomatic reply, "I know, I know, it will be hard for you ; but it is very necessary !"

"You *do* suspect him !"

Crump held up his hand.

"Miss Mansfield," he said, "when I was in active service, I was continually getting into trouble through jumping at conclusions. The wretched habit has grown on me. I must be on my guard against it now. I am most anxious to learn all I can about Mr. Seaton Revelle. I must not say more than this !"

He had taken back the photograph, and casually glanced at it himself.

It was a very excellent likeness of Mr. Benjamin Beard. On the morning after Scarsdale's conviction, Crump had paid a visit to his old head-quarters, Scotland Yard, where he was always welcome. After an interview with the Chief, he had spent a considerable time over certain photographic albums containing the likenesses of ladies and gentlemen who had suffered terms of imprisonment at various periods. And among these he had come across the face that he had seen in court the day before—the face that had worn a grey hue of terror when Scarsdale had pointed an accusing finger up at the gallery. The letterpress, in connection with the photograph, stated that Herbert Giles, alias the Tinker, had served five years' penal servitude for burglary, and gave besides certain particulars about height, age, and personal appearance. The discovery had caused Crump to chuckle quietly to himself, a sure sign of satisfaction on his part.

He returned the photograph to his case, and took out a card.

"That address will always find me, Miss Mansfield. Let me give it to you now before I forget. You will notice that the name on the card is 'Penworthy,' and in the corner, 'Horticultural Specialist and Landscape Gardener' Unfortunately, in a case like this, in trying to get at the truth, one frequently has to practise deception—or perhaps 'act' were the better word. If any questions should be asked about the object of this visit of mine, you would explain that I called to see whether I could obtain any work here in my capacity of landscape-gardener. In fact, it is just possible that, one of these days, I shall ask you to give me a recommendation."

The little man's eyes twinkled.

"And though, at the present moment, you may have no work to give me, I should be greatly obliged if you would show me over the grounds of this beautiful place ; but, though it has nothing to do with landscape-gardening, I should like to see the interior of the house first !"

"Come !" said Esther.

She led the way from the dining-room. Her father was away in London. Crump made a very careful examination of the study, and the exterior of the safe. Then he requested to be shown the bedrooms occupied by Seaton Revelle and

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Scarsdale on the night of the burglary. This done, he passed out with Esther into the grounds.

"H'm, yes!" he said, having seen all that there was to be seen, "thank you very much, very much indeed. Now, you have that address of mine, Miss Mansfield?"

"Yes; but I am going away to-morrow. Let me give you mine."

Crump pencilled down the name of a hotel at a watering-place on the south coast.

"I shall probably be writing to you in the course of a few days. And now I am going to wish you good-bye for the present. I am an old fellow, Miss Mansfield—I've knocked about the world a good deal, and you won't mind me giving you a little piece of advice. Don't let yourself despair! Show a brave face to the world. I know, I know, my dear child—forgive me; but I'm quite old enough to be your father; I know it's very hard; but you will try, won't you?"

He looked at her almost wistfully out of his small grey eyes. The words had been spoken very quietly, and with a simple tenderness that was truly affecting. They had reached the gate opening out into the road. Crump held out his hand.

"We are going to work very hard—you and I," he said. "I trust—I will go so far as to say that I believe we shall be successful ultimately, but we must be very, very patient!"

He wrung her hand warmly, then raised his hat, with a quaint, old-world bow, and before Esther could find words to express her gratitude he was moving away down the road towards the village; but presently he turned, and nodded his head with a cheery, hopeful smile.

"Dear me," he said, half-aloud, a little later, "it's a sad, heart-achey sort of business, this; but there is one consolation—we have made a start, and"—he rubbed his hands together and chuckled softly—"and, taking all things into consideration, not half a bad start either; but I am afraid it's going to be a long business. The world will not believe Alec Scarsdale innocent until we have brought home the guilt conclusively to someone else, and that will take an enormous amount of doing. It never occurred to me at the time, but it's an unfortunate thing that that young rascal, Freddie, made known my real identity at the Crown and Cushion. It rather hampers me. I don't want it to get about that I have been seen pottering about in the neighbourhood. Well, well, it's remarkable what a difference a beard and moustache make to some people's appearance!"

He chuckled again.

"I must confess that I am rather pleased with the idea of Penworthy, horticultural specialist, and landscape gardener!"

He gave a little sigh.

"And that is what I should have been if I could only have my time over again!"

CHAPTER XI.

Penal Servitude!—The Face of the Photograph.

The sickly light of dawn scarcely seemed to penetrate the thick mist that, like a gloomy shroud, hung round the grim, solitary building that loomed out through the greyness like a dark blot. And even the jangling prison bell, as it summoned five hundred human beings, held in the merciless grip of the law, from their narrow bed boards, even the jangling bell had a muffled, death-like note, as if the mist had wrapped itself round the clapper, and had robbed the metal of its resonance. And, as if not content with enshrouding the prison and muffling the bell, the damp mist crawled into the very cells, to deepen the gloom of the poor wretches within.

Year in, year out, in winter and summer, every morning that jangling bell rouses the sleeper, or tells the wakeful one that night is past, that another weary day of labour, of monotony, of degradation is dawning, and must be lived through. And many a man who has passed through the horrors of prison existence to freedom and life again, will start from his bed at a quarter to six as the fancied jangle of that bell rings in his ears.

The jangling bell had awakened convict No. 35 T from dreams of freedom, of sunshine, of a sweet pure face, with shining eyes, to the hopelessness of a prison cell. In the semi-darkness he wearily rose from the hard bed with its scanty and not over-clean coverings, to begin the degradation of the day by putting on the ill-fitting, hideous prison dress, with its grim decoration of broad arrows.

Those ladies and gentlemen who, not a year back, when they deposited their money at Mansfield's Bank, used to have an occasional chat with the handsome young cashier, would have found it hard to believe that Alec Scarsdale and the gaunt convict No. 35 T, with his close-cropped hair, stubby beard, and haggard features, were one and the same man.

After being sentenced at the Old Bailey, Alec Scarsdale had been sent to serve the first nine months of his sentence at a reception convict prison in the near vicinity of London. During these first nine months a prisoner is known as "a separate." Close confinement, no intercourse except with gaoler, doctor, or governor, hard labour, hard bed, and just sufficient food, roughly represent the first nine months of convict existence. At the end of that period, Scarsdale had been drafted to a "Public works" prison where the convicts were made to labour at brick-making, quarrying, and fortress-building.

Sometimes during that first terrible period, Scarsdale had fancied that his reason would give way. Time, instead of soothing, only seemed to intensify his mental agony. For the first week, he had scarcely slept at all. Night after night, he had paced to and fro his dark cell, living through the past, or feverishly thinking of the hopelessness of the future. Sometimes he would stop his tramping, and the silence would be broken by the sound of grinding teeth and deep breathing as his lips moved in a silent prayer for revenge—revenge on the man who had so irreparably wronged him, who had dashed the cup of happiness from his lips. More than once the warder on night duty, as he patrolled the corridor in his felted shoes—"sneaks" is the prison-term for them—had heard a woman's name—"Esther" he fancied—hoarsely murmured.

Scarsdale was of an impulsive, vehement nature, but it must not be thought that he was lacking in self-control. It is not the single drop, but the continual dropping of water that wears away a stone. If Scarsdale sometimes broke down it was under the pressure of accumulated despair.

Escape—was it possible? Scarsdale thought of the sentries, the signalmen, the patrol, of the thousand-and-one precautions. And yet men had escaped. His heart throbbed fiercely as for a brief instant he suffered his imagination to run riot, and a wild thought flashed through his brain. If he could escape, and could keep clear of the law's clutches, if he had time, he might yet find the man whose face was imperishably stamped on his memory, the man he had seen standing by the open safe; the man he had caught a glimpse of that day, at the Old Bailey, when he had been torn from the prison dock. He tried to dismiss the thought from him as mad and impossible. But all through the weary night it had kept him awake with haunting pertinacity.

Escape, escape, escape—the word seemed to ring in his ears. He found himself recalling stories of marvellous escapes he had read of as a boy. The very bell seemed to clang out "Escape!" with such a deafening persistency that he was almost fain to thrust his fingers in his ears to deaden the sound.

Escape!

And to Esther Mansfield, the leaden, dragging months had been as full of torture. The heartache was none the less because she presented a brave face to the world. Nearly

a year had passed since she had left Warham, since her meeting with Crump. After a stay on the English coast, her father had taken her abroad. She had written to, and received letters from Crump—kindly, sympathetic letters that preached the gospel of patience and hope; but the little man was only human. He had been, and was working, quietly and patiently; but he had been unable to trace Herbert Giles, *alias* the Tinker. Benjamin Beard had left the country for a while, and flying from one place to another, was spending money and a having lively time on the Continent. Yet the little man was mildly hopeful. A letter from Esther, written from the South of France, told him that Seaton Revelle had arrived on the scene, and was staying at the same hotel. Crump had also learnt that Revelle had rented a certain desirable residence at Warham, not far from Mr. Mansfield's house, and intended shortly to take up his quarters there, and Crump had jumped at the conclusion as to the nature of the game that Mr. Revelle meditated playing. And then another letter had reached him from Esther, saying that Revelle had left for England, and that Esther and her father were returning themselves shortly.

It was a grey November day when a London train steamed into Warham station. Seaton Revelle, already established in his new quarters, stood on the platform, a cigar between his teeth. He moved towards a dapper little man, who, carrying a Gladstone bag, alighted from a first-class carriage.

"Hullo, Faversham, here you are! Glad to see you. Come along. I've got the trap waiting!"

They were on the point of leaving the station, when Revelle caught sight of two familiar figures leaving another carriage.

"One moment, Faversham, some old friends of mine!"

The old friends were John Mansfield and Esther.

Time had added to the whiteness of the banker's hair; his shoulders were more stooping. And Esther had changed. The glad light of unburdened youth no longer shone from the hazel eyes; but in its place the wistful look of one who had, and was still, suffering. But the chastening hand of grief, that had transformed the light-hearted girl into a woman, instead of ravaging, had added to her beauty an indescribable, if pathetic, charm.

No twinge of remorse seemed to pluck at his conscience as, with out-stretched hands and mellow voice, Seaton Revelle welcomed back the travellers. Esther's eyes momentarily dilated with a look of unconquerable loathing, and, with a little shiver, she shrank back. Then, crushing back her feelings with a great effort, she took the proffered hand. She had a part to play now—a part that would wear and strain heart and nerve alike—and she must play it. A part in the thrilling drama of life! Where the light was the light of day, and the darkness the darkness of night; where the emotions of joy and pain were real; where the audience cheered the villain, and hooted the hero. And Heaven only knew whether right or wrong would avail when the bell should ring for the curtain to descend.

It was an icy hand that Seaton Revelle inclosed in his cool, clean grip. But his touch seemed to infuse a molten stream into her veins, and two hectic spots blazed out on Esther's pale cheeks. It was the hand that had struck down Alec Scarsdale; the hand that, when he stood in the witness-box, had raised the Testament—"the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me, God!"—to his lying lips.

She had her part to play. In a low voice she thanked him for his inquiries, and when John Mansfield, after a friendly interchange of greetings, invited Seaton Revelle to dine with him a few days later, Esther seconded the invitation.

Then Revelle turned and beckoned to his friend.

"Miss Mansfield, may I introduce an old friend of mine, Mr. Faversham!"

Mr. Faversham raised his hat politely

Esther drew in her breath quickly, as she caught sight of his face.

It was the face of the photograph—the photograph that Crump had shown her nearly a year ago!

(To be continued.)

(The incident illustrated on the cover of this number is dealt with in next week's instalment.)

Quite a Prosaic Affair.

How Jim Loved and Very Nearly Lost.

It was "Steady's" evening to call, but even the best "Steady" in the world grows to be an old story when he comes with clock-like regularity at half-past 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday of every week. So "Steady's" girl, who worked for a living and firmly believed in womanly independence, often read the daily paper aloud in lieu of other entertainment or when conversation flagged, for both had passed the age (or is it only a stage?) of thrills, blushes, tender glances and expressive pauses. In fact, 'twas understood definitely to be only a modern platonic friendship.

"Steady" wasn't a literary chap either, but anything the "Object" read seemed music to his ears and he was, day by day, learning to appreciate the true value of newspapers.

The "Object's" name was Alice, but the "Steady" himself was blessed with the unromantic and thoroughly respectable appellation of Jim. Had fates made it Harold or Gerald, perhaps the "Object" would have devoted less time to the daily news.

This evening there had been an unromantic pause for fully five minutes, when Jim exclaimed: "Why can't you read out loud? I can't even see your face through that blanket sheet." A remark which, under the circumstances, seemed a trifle unplatonic.

"Oh, well, you never could see through anything," laughed Alice. "But, if you care to know, I'll tell you. I was reading of the Yorkshire clergyman who preached a sermon on the seven meanest men in Yorkshire."

"Poor sinners! How they must have felt!"

"Of course, they weren't present. Anyway, the sermon was impersonal. He simply selected seven of the meanest traits in men."

"Well, lets hear the parson's list."

"Please be a little more devout in your remarks. What do you think is the worst trait in man?"

"A man who abuses his wife."

"Oh, of course, but every man isn't blessed with a wife.

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Select something general that will apply to bachelors, benedicts and widowers. Now, to me, deceitfulness seems the most objectionable, I think."

"You, being a woman, can undoubtedly judge that trait more truly than man."

Alice suddenly dropped the offending screen and surveyed Jim in half amazement, not quite knowing whether the remark was a veiled insinuation or stumbled upon by chance.

"You speak as if you had had experience, Jim. Have you ever loved and lost?"

"I have only loved, never lost."

"Then you are as yet a very incomplete, imperfect man. It was too bad you were successful the first time. That is sure to make a man conceited."

"I did not say I was successful. But your remarks are very sweeping and authoritative."

"They are based on observation only. Having never experienced the cause, of course, I could not feel the effect. Having never loved, how could I lose? And how could I love a man who deceived me even in a small matter. Suppose I asked you up Sunday afternoon and you promised in good faith to come, but nevertheless, you failed to appear, and later sent me a note saying that you were unavoidably detained. Afterwards I discover that you spent the afternoon with Nellie B. instead. Wouldn't that make me distrust you ever after? Of course this is only an example in social life, but 'twould be even worse in business affairs. Men are becoming so womanish. They can't answer decisively. They have outgrown the point-blank reply in acquiring the habit of giving an affirmative couched in doubt or a negative bolstered with hopes. They seem to be aping French courtiers of last century."

"You're becoming too intense, Alice. Relax your feelings or you'll reach an inglorious climax. Take some bon-bons" (a "Steady" may bring bon-bons if the "Object" is fully aware of his platonic state) "and let's hear the other traits discovered by the Yorkshire parson."

"These are good (the bon-bons). Let's see. Second, the stingy man. Yes, women will all agree there. Some of those goody-goody men, who seem all but angels in their church environments, squeeze a penny until they blush in real life."

"Pennies—new ones—are red anyway——"

"I mean the man blushes, you stupid. Grows red in the face, if that suits you better. Still, the stingy man is to be pitied. I believe he really suffers in parting with the filthy lucre. I don't believe you're stingy, are you?"

"You wouldn't have a man testify against himself, would you?"

"Oh, but you aren't guilty, I am sure, or I should have discovered it long ago. My first admirer was affected with the malady and allowed me to pay for my own tea when he escorted me to a church bazaar. Wasn't that a romantic beginning for love's young dream?"

"The brute! But continue."

"Next comes cowardice. Everyone hates a coward. They are classified into three classes—moral, mental and physical cowards. Then comes the conceited, don't-touch me, I-am-better-than-you-are man. The prig, I should call him. The liar looms up prominently among the seven, and last, but not least, are the selfish man and the scandal-monger."

"Now, let's have the list, complete?"

"The conceited coxcomb, the miser, the deceiver, the liar, the coward, the scandal-monger and the selfish man."

"Rather a dubious lay-out, isn't it?"

"You speak of it as if it was a menu."

"Don't try sarcasm on me, Alice. Tell me, honestly, instead, have I any of these traits in a dangerously developed state?"

"No-o, I don't think so. Why?"

"Then I'm not such a bad fellow after all, am I?"

"Oh, no, You're just comfortable. Neither shockingly bad nor alarmingly good."

"Just the kind of fellow you'd like to spend the rest of your life with, Alice?"

"Well, if I were to die young I might think about it, but I've been told that I'm to reach a ripe old age, so I really couldn't consider the matter."

"You are in earnest?"

"Ye-es. Well, I might think about it. But, really, Jim, I never had any of that grand passion of which I have read. When you were absent last winter I slept and ate with unexpected regularity and felt no pangs of despair. You never told me that life would be a dreary blank without me nor wrote me fervid love epistles. Thinking it all over, I'm sure this is not a case of real love. And if you make another careful diagnosis you, too, will discover that it's only friendship."

"I told you once to-night that I had loved, but never lost, but now I also know the sorrow of losing. I know you think me a stoical, unfeeling chap, but, Alice, you are everything to me. I can't express this in poetical or flowery language, for its sincerity is too deep for that, even were I able. Now give me your hand, for it's farewell."

"Why, Jim! I shall miss you. Really, you are too serious about this matter. We'll forget it in a day or two and go back to the old way."

"Never! I'm not a child. Good-bye!"

* * * * * *

Jim kept his resolve and Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday evenings often seemed very lonely to Alice even though she tried to make herself believe that her work absorbed her whole attention.

One day, when returning from her work, she met Jim and Nellie B., both seemingly in the best of humour. Indeed, Jim looked anything but a forsaken lover. Somehow the thought that Jim didn't care and was absolutely happy in another's company, seemed peculiarly unwelcome. She tried to shake it off, but in spite of her efforts, life had suddenly grown dreary. Several days in succession she met the couple, always laughing and chatting gaily.

One night after her daily encounter she made a resolve and hastily sat down at her writing desk and wrote the following brief note:

"Dear Jim.—The Yorkshire clergyman overlooked one of the objectionable traits in men. I have recently made a discovery of my own.

"Alice."

Of course this note brought Jim, as she hoped that it would. In fact, he came the very next evening. And when he insisted on further explanation, Alice only told him to guess.

"But, really, I can't. I thought seven cardinal vices were bad enough, but here you discover the eighth. Now, what is it? I am really anxious to know."

"Well, it's the obtuse man who always takes a woman at her word."

"Alice, do you mean you really cared?"

"Haven't I lost six pounds in weight and any amount of sleep since you went away?"

"And now may I come back, not platonically as you used to say, but as a real lover, even if a trifle practical and moderate?"

"Yes, Jim, as a lover whom I almost had to lose before I learnt to appreciate his true worth."

H. C. L.

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The Dentist's Love Story.

The Narrative of a Double Partnership.

"It would not be correct to say that I loved Miss Baker 'at first sight,' which was nearly half a year ago; for Mrs. Tucker was then living—a beautiful character, with apparently every prospect of long and happy years before her; then gone in a minute, as you might say, like—like a soft filling, leaving only an aching cavity where it had once bloomed. But if I did not love Miss Baker I was interested in her as I never had been in a patient before; interested professionally. You don't know her? No; perhaps it is better you shouldn't, for your own peace of mind, sir. Wait a minute and I will show you something."

Dr. Tucker disappeared in the little workshop adjoining his operating room, and presently returned with a triumphant smile and a set of false teeth.

"I want you to look at this," he said, as he pushed me gently back in the chair and again gagged me with the rubber apron. "You see, of course, what it is, but perhaps only a professional man can appreciate its full beauty. There they lie, like gems in a casket; thirty-two of them, and every one flawless. Now, you will hardly believe me, but I must ask you to take my word for it, when I say that these teeth, made by the best artists in the world, aren't one bit finer, stronger, more regular or better formed than the glorious set with which nature has endowed Miss Baker. And when it comes to beauty, gloss and what you would call 'expression,' bless you, sir, these are nowhere beside the simple handiwork of nature. It is marvellous what nature can do when she sets about it.

"Well, you may guess what a joy it was to me to be called upon once or twice a month to go over those teeth of Miss Baker's one by one, lingering fondly over each, watching anxiously lest there might be the first symptoms of decay, rejoicing when I ever found them sound and brilliant and spotless as pearls. There was a time, after my second sad bereavement, a period of ten days, during which I never once entered my studio. When at last I did return, I found a note from Miss Baker, asking me to give her an appointment, as she did not like, she said, 'to go to a stranger.'

"'What did it mean?' I asked myself, with beating heart. At least it meant what it said—I was not a 'stranger' to her. Of course, I was not foolish enough to misunderstand the object of her request. It was strictly professional; yet I could not help indulging in a wild hope that a time might come when—— And I could wait. The world was all before us, comparatively speaking; for Miss Baker was in the prime of her youthful beauty, and our united ages would not exceed three score and ten, which is the limit allotted to even a single individual, I believe.

"I wrote at once, appointing the following Thursday (it was then Friday) for her visit. I had hope, but alas, I had not the confidence to hasten the day which should forever determine my fate for good or ill.

"The day came, and so did she. I had studied beforehand how I should press my suit, delicately, eloquently as I knew how, but frankly and openly, as I had always done in such cases, I am proud to say.

"But who can foresee even an hour ahead? When Miss Baker came at the appointed hour, 2.25 p.m., her beautiful face was muffled in a handkerchief, what was visible of it being drawn with anguish. I hastened to greet her and ask the question of which my instincts too truly anticipated the answer. She had the toothache. A brief examination confirmed the terrible announcement. It was the little rift within the lute, the flaw in the diamond, the speck on the ripe fruit. And yet, so strange is the heart of man, I almost rejoiced to know that even that peerless set was subject to mortal decay. It would henceforth be my melancholy pleasure to be its and her champion against the insidious enemy, to guard the pearly portals of her beauty, against the ravages of decay.

"To my unbounded surprise, she refused all my offers to save the stricken tooth—it was the second molar in the left lower jaw, a noble specimen, barely touched by the frost of disease. I told her how easy would be the work, how almost painless the process, how fatal the mistake of removing it. She was inflexible, deaf to all my prayers, almost childishly unnerved by the pain which she was enduring and had already endured.

"'I hate it!' she said, 'for it hurts me, and I wish it drawn at once, do you understand? At once! Take it out and——burn it! I never want to see or feel it again.'

"This, of course, was irrational and even ridiculous; but when she finally declared that if I did not obey her orders she would go to somebody who would, I simply had to comply. With what feelings you may imagine.

"She would not take ether or gas. She said she was not afraid and that was enough. I then explained to her the method of deadening suffering by the use of cocaine locally applied. She seemed pleased with the idea, and I prepared for the painful duty with such feelings as an artist might experience if ordered to destroy the picture which had cost the labour and enthusiasm of years to paint. For I loved Miss Baker's teeth, every one of them, perhaps more than I did herself.

"She sat in the chair where you now sit, while I arranged, with trembling hands, for the cruel sacrifice.

"At last all was ready. But when the moment came I simply could not do it. I gazed at the doomed molar, and never before had I seen a tooth which seemed to plead in such dumb eloquence for its life. I could not go on.

"Flinging away the cruel weapon, I fell on my knees beside the chair, and in an uncontrollable burst of passion pleaded for the tooth and myself. I told the whole story of my love. I spoke of the strength and purity and beauty of the molar. In my excitement it is possible that I confounded professional instinct with personal devotion. I was no longer master of my words or thoughts. I must have been eloquent, for at last I saw that she was moved. She shook with suppressed emotion, and smiled on me for the first time since she had entered the office.

"'You are very kind, Dr. Tucker,' she said, 'but all that you say is useless, and some of it I do not understand. I came here to have a tooth drawn. Will you kindly do as I have desired, or let me go elsewhere. It will be time enough to speak of other matters afterwards.'

"What did she mean? Was it possible that——? No matter, I would do her bidding and extract the fated molar though, as Tennyson says, 'though my heart be at the root.' I was intoxicated, blinded, with mingled love, hope, wonder, excitement, as I leant over the chair, and, turning my eyes away involuntarily, applied the fatal forceps.

* * * * *

"She did not shriek, nor faint, nor falter, though a spasm of pain convulsed her beautiful features for an instant. As for me, I was grief-stricken at the needless sacrifice, but upborne by the consciousness of duty done.

"'There,' I exclaimed, holding aloft the proof of my self-sacrifice, 'I have obeyed you at a cost to my feelings which you can never comprehend. I have no desire to display my superior judgment, for, as you know too well, dear Miss Baker (I was

very sorry here that I had never learnt her first name, for it is a little disconcerting to have to make an impassioned address to the object of your devotion as 'dear Miss' anything), but if you will be kind enough to examine this molar you will see that the little trouble which has given you so much pain and impelled you to this great sacrifice could have been remedied without so heavy a cost.'

"'I don't want to see it,' she cried, turning away her head; 'I hate it. Take it away and burn it, I say.'

"But, conscious of rectitude, and anxious—perhaps over-anxious—to show my superior judgment, I continued:

"'Pardon me, but I really must request that you notice, if only for an instant, that the decay at the base of the tooth is merely superficial. I will point it out with the end of the probe. It is just there—'

"And then, if you will believe me, when I turned the tooth to the light to locate the spot exactly, I could not find a speck or shadow of decay anywhere. I could hardly believe my eyes, so I put on my glasses, with trembling fingers, and then—then, for the first time I discovered my fatal error.

"I actually shrieked aloud in my remorse and horror—for I had drawn the wrong tooth!

"She saw it in my face, I think, for she simply set her teeth firmly, and in icy tones asked:

"'Will you be kind enough, Mr. Tucker, to tell me what you have done now?'

"What could I say? What would you have said under the circumstances? I tried to explain. I implored her forgiveness. I told her that I would procure the finest artificial tooth on the habitable globe, to repair my terrible mistake.

"She rose from the chair, and went into the retiring room without a word, and presently came back with her hat and cloak on.

"Then drawing herself up to her full height, and surveying me from head to foot, she said:

"'If I understand you aright, you have made me a flattering offer of the gifted hand which has just disfigured my mouth. If it were possible for one to be insulted by an inferior, you have done your best to insult me. You have only succeeded in inflicting physical injury, for which I shall take care to have you suitably punished.'

"Then, by Jove, sir, she walked out, slamming the door after her. If I had felt like following her, I need not have opened it—I was small enough to go through the key-hole.

"'What happened afterwards?' you ask. Nothing happened afterwards. There hasn't been any afterwards yet worth mentioning. This is Thursday, isn't it? Well, that is the Thursday I spoke of in the beginning.' The lady you met on the stairs is Miss Baker. What will happen I don't know. I don't intend waiting to find out, either. I have had enough of life here. Don't stir, sir. I am going to finish filling that cavity to-night, if I am ever to fill it. To-morrow you won't find any Dr. Tucker, no matter if every tooth in your head was afire, as I hope they aren't going to be."

So ended the dentist's story.

There was an item in the papers of the following afternoon about the "Mysterious disappearance of a well-known dentist in Bond Street," concerning which "further revelations" would appear later.

They never appeared; but in their stead I saw a card stating that:

"Dr. George W. Tucker, late of Bond Street, has formed a co-partnership with Dr. A. J. Bibb of Manchester. Office hours 9 to 6."

That was all, save that a week or two later I read in a Manchester paper that "Dr. George W. Tucker, the well-known dentist of Broad Street, is about to lead to the altar Georgiana Wilhelmina Annabella, the eldest daughter of Dr. A. J. Bibb of this city." **John Parker.**

THE FEAT OF LITTLE ELLEN.

How a Plucky Girl Saved her Husband from Death.

Everybody said when the Darcys adopted her that they were mad—hopelessly mad.

She was the child of some circus people; her father had been killed by a fall from a trapeze, and her mother, ill at the time, had died from the shock. She herself had appeared many times in the ring; she had acted on the trapeze, had walked the tight-rope high above people's heads and had been cheered to the echo when she rode the wonderful horses.

The manager felt that she might easily become the world's most famous bare-backed rider and get her picture put up in every village in the country, but then he realised that there were loftier ambitions than that, and when Dr. Darcy offered to take the child and provide for her, he didn't hesitate about giving her up.

And that's how "Little Ellen" was lost to James Simpson's Ten Big Shows. She grew up in a quiet little Canadian town without doing anything more scandalous than yielding to a very natural desire to astonish her playmates by performances on the clothes-line, in the back-yard, or on the rafters in the old-fashioned barn, or on the high garden fence. She was dearly beloved by the good old doctor and his wife, and at eighteen might have passed for the daughter of an earl. It was then that Philip Rogers came home from college, saw her, and fell in love with her. And then it was that everybody said he was mad — hopelessly mad. She was pretty, she was well educated, she was lovable, she was altogether charming, but the daughter of circus people—and such people!

But because she was the one woman in the world for the young heir, he married her and took her to a golden Paradise in the Cariboo mountains.

Right away there in the heart of the most wonderful scenery, lie the marvellously rich "Forget-me-not" gold mines, called now, however, by the name of "Little Ellen." The name was changed after the big strike, and this is how it happened:

Philip represented his father's large interests there and when the strike came on, as the embodiment of capital, labour put his name on the fated lists and he was set apart from the first. He and Ellen had been at the mines but a year, and the union men looked on him quite as a tenderfoot, who ought to be easily managed. But at the end of the first week of the strike, they found that they were dealing with a man whose courage was commensurate with his strength, whom neither threats nor bribes could influence.

Rumours came of the massacre not far off, and the butchery of the women and children, but it was not until the

day of the riot that Ellen heard of the troubles hanging over the "Forget-me-not."

"Phil!" she cried. "Here have I been singing about the house and you have been—" She broke off, too white for tears.

"You shall go on singing, dearest!" he answered, but they sat hand-in-hand in silence. Was there no note of warning in the music of the pines?

All was quiet in the valley below, but Ellen's heart misgave her. As for Philip, he knew that it was the calm before the storm, for to-morrow at nine, George Moriarty, the leader of the strikers, and Philip Rogers, the representative of the company, were to confer together. There were breakers ahead, and reefs and rocks, but the whirlpool which was waiting to engulf him he could not see.

By the request of the strikers, the conference was postponed until the afternoon, and it was not until after sunset that Philip and Moriarty met in the latter's one-room cabin.

Within reach of Moriarty's voice were 400 union men—Philip looked out at a light up on the hillside and remembered that there was none, save himself, to help her. Therefore he was reasoning most patiently and earnestly. Heavens! what is this? A flash, a terrific explosion; Moriarty was lying in a heap before him. Bloodstains were on his clothes, and a smoking revolver at his feet! It was Philip's voice that called the strikers, and when they came—God save any man from such a moment! It was in vain that Philip declared that the shot had been fired from outside—it availed nothing. A rope round his neck and death on the nearest tree within five minutes!

A vivid flash revealed the white figure swaying fifteen feet in the air with its light beard, its haggard face, its shaggy hair.

The next man in authority to Moriarty stopped them—his was a plan of more exquisite suffering. It was decreed that their prisoner was to keep watch alone all night over the dead body, the rude cabin being guarded on the outside by a dozen of their number, and the next day he was to hang over a slow fire, kindled on Moriarty's grave.

They agreed and finally withdrew, and that night the mountains echoed to such shouts of carousals as the "Forget-me-not" had never heard before. Philip sat alone with the dead, watching through the single window the light on the hillside. He looked at it with an unfaltering eye, though he knew that six cruel guns were pointed at that window and six at the opposite door. Who committed the cowardly deed for which he was to pay the penalty he never knew. What wrong was avenged, what crime was atoned for by Moriarty's death he never discovered. Indeed, so well did the assassin lay his plans that he was never detected.

Meantime the news had been broken to Ellen in the most brutal way. Two hours after the killing, Hamilton, the new leader, was told that the wife of the prisoner wished to see him and Ellen was led in to hear coarse jests, receive gross insults, and suffer what was almost death to a tenderly nurtured woman. She asked for only five minutes, and, as she knelt in the agony of her soul, her helplessness and beauty kindled a momentary warmth in Hamilton's heart.

"Let her see him for five minutes, boys." Then gruffly: "Five minutes, remember, and watch the interview."

How could one little woman thwart the purpose of 400 men?

The most poignant moment of Philip's trial came when he saw Ellen led away. It was maddening to think of what might be in store for her. But he preserved his calm, dignified mien, sat down by the lamp, took some letters from his pocket and began to read. His captors looked at him curiously. As Philip read his heart stood still within him, for these were the words: "When you hear the whip-poor-will come to the window. The second call blow out the light. The coast will be clear—you must escape, dear. Run to the little gulch—for my sake!"

It had come to him by Ellen's hand and the reading of it threw him into the most horrible doubts. It would be worse than folly.

Suddenly there came the whip-poor-will's call. He was at the window in a quarter of a second. In the weird light he saw a figure in white, in mid air, coming slowly towards the cabin. Then came a bright flash of lightning, and he saw one of the guards fall prone to the earth and three rush headlong towards the valley. As the remainder of the guard ran round the house, a vivid flash revealed the white figure swaying fifteen feet in the air with its light beard, its haggard face, its shaggy hair! Moriarty's ghost! The men made a simultaneous dash for the shelter of the cabin.

At that moment the storm burst over the "Forget-me-not."

Every newspaper told how the lovers fled away into the storm and all the west rang with admiration of Ellen's daring exploit. She attacked the great weakness of the enemy—superstition—and as Moriarty's ghost she conquered. The rope on which she walked was one of wire stretched from the trestle of an ore track to a tree near Moriarty's house.

The "Little Ellen Gold Mines" are now extremely rich, but all their wealth is not half so precious to Philip as is the love of his wife.

Enfield Joiner.

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The Romance of an Eccentric Will.

A Lover by Legacy.

As the train steamed out of King's Cross Station, Philip Carew glanced over the miscellaneous assortment of literature which he had purchased at the bookstall. Taking up "Bradshaw," he found, by studying a complicated array of figures, that the three o'clock train from London to Linthorpe took a dreary five hours over the journey, reckoning the time spent in changing, first at Peterborough, then at Boston, and again at an out-of-the-world junction he had never before heard of. Having ascertained this, he threw himself back in his corner seat, crossed his legs, and tried to interest himself in a popular magazine.

But this was impossible. He was in no mood to follow the adventures of people who had never had any real existence. Besides, their experience seemed quite commonplace beside his own.

He threw the magazine aside, leant his head against the cushion, and began to reflect on the situation with half-closed eyes. Until the eccentric will of his uncle Christopher had fallen like a bomb at his feet, his life had been quiet and uneventful, and he had known the solid happiness of the artist whose work is rapidly increasing in public favour. But now!

Had his uncle's legacy of £1,000 a year not been qualified by so preposterous a condition, he would have considered himself one of fortune's special favourites, for the regular receipt of so large an income would remove all necessity for turning out "pot-boilers." But unfortunately the money could only be his on condition that he married. That was not such a very trying ordeal after all, ordinary folk might say, but ordinary folk did not understand such matters. He had always held firm to the doctrine that men with artistic careers before them should never marry. Being already wedded to Art, they could not well do so without being guilty of a subtle kind of bigamy!

Still, it would not have been quite so bad if his uncle had left him a little choice in the matter, and allowed him to make his own selection from the ranks of marriageable maidenhood. But Mr. Christopher Carew had decided otherwise, and had actually named the lady whom Philip must marry before he could enter upon the enjoyment of that tempting legacy.

"Madge Waring, of Linthorpe, Lincolnshire."

As there were no other occupants in the compartment, he repeated the name aloud several times, and then fell to wondering what kind of girl this Madge Waring was. The will simply mentioned her name, studiously ignoring all essential particulars. His imagination, therefore, had the widest possible play. She might be anything in age from fifteen to fifty. In looks, she might be dowdy and plain or surpassingly beautiful. Either way it could not matter much, for he had fully made up his mind at the start to wash his hands of the whole mad business.

After pondering over the matter for a whole week, he had suddenly made up his mind to run down to Linthorpe, seek out the relatives of Miss Madge Waring, and apprise them, in as delicate a way as possible, that he was not at all disposed to accept a wife on his uncle's tantalising terms. If he found them cultured people, he would soften his refusal of the lady by informing them of his vow to remain always an artistic celibate. Then he would return to London and to his work, and forget that there was such a person in existence as Madge Waring.

At Peterborough he changed into a slow train. As it did not start immediately, he occupied himself with studying the country folk standing on the platform. It was a relief for him to listen to their talk after sitting for two hours in a lonely carriage, with no company but his own conflicting thoughts. He was inwardly hoping some of the rusties would enter his compartment, when, just as the train was about to move, a young lady, who had bid a hurried good-bye to two children on the platform, entered the compartment, and, quite out of breath, sat down in the further corner.

When the train had started, Philip Carew again tried to read, and again failed. But this time his thoughts were diverted from the printed page, not by shadowy visions of an imaginary bride, but by a more tangible specimen of womanhood—the young lady in the corner.

She had a magazine, too, and was reading with evident interest. Ah, it was easy enough, Carew reflected, to be composed when you hadn't to solve an intricate problem set you by an eccentric relative. This girl was to be envied, for she at least was at liberty to marry or not, and whom she pleased.

He continued gazing at her over the covers of his magazine. She was pretty beyond question, and it was that type of beauty which pleased him best; the beauty which is quite compatible with the existence of brains. A well-shaped brow shaded a fine pair of light brown eyes, thoughtful and expressive. Her mouth was mobile and sensitive, the curve at the corner of the lips showing that she had the faculty of humorous appreciation. No doubt she would see the humour of his own predicament if she only knew it. He himself had dim glimpses of the fun of the thing occasionally; but the full enjoyment of the joke was only possible to outsiders.

As he peered over the edge of his magazine, he was conscious of a fine colour effect. The slanting rays of the setting sun were transfiguring the girl's light auburn hair. He watched the effect with all the artist's delight.

Presently the train pulled up with an unpleasant jerk, which threw them both forward, and caused the girl to drop her magazine. Carew politely recovered it for her, and received as his reward a pleasant smile. He had been longing to break the silence, and here was the opportunity.

"This will be Boston, I believe?" he said.

"Yes," she replied, without any constraint, "you can see the famous church tower quite plainly from this window."

He crossed the carriage. "Ah, yes," he said. "I seem to recognise it in a vague sort of way. Yet I can have seen it only in a picture, for I have never been in this part of the country before."

"No?" she said, "you will find it interesting, I think."

"You know it well?" he inquired.

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"It is my home," she informed him.

"Boston?" he asked.

"No—Linthorpe, away there by the sea. I am going there now."

"By Jove!" Carew exclaimed, "so am I! How strange, and yet how pleasant to find I shall have company."

The girl smiled. "These slow journeys are a trifle wearisome," she said, "And I'm afraid you won't find Linthorpe looking at its best just now. The season doesn't commence for quite a month yet."

Carew's brow clouded. "I'm not going there for pleasure," he observed lugubriously. "Quite otherwise."

They continued chatting on a variety of matters, and in the course of conversation, he ascertained that she was a governess living with a family a little way out of Linthorpe. She showed great interest when he spoke of his own profession, and she made one or two sound observations on art which quite astonished him.

Her manner was so frank and agreeable that he found no difficulty in talking quite unconstrainedly. In fact, he felt so much at his ease, and her tastes were so congenial with his own, that it almost seemed at times he was chatting to an old friend.

A smart gig was awaiting her at Linthorpe Station.

"Good-bye," he said. "I am awfully glad to have met you, and, although it is a bold wish coming from a mere stranger, I hope we may meet again."

"I am afraid not," she returned. "The chances are against it, for you have told me your stay in Linthorpe will be brief, and as for myself, I seldom travel. But you will be taking back some studies, I suppose?"

"Yes, in all probability. It depends on my mood. I may go off with my sketch-book to-morrow instead of attending to the business I have in hand. By the way"—he found the temptation quite irresistible—"do you know a family here of the name of Waring?"

She was stepping into the gig as he asked the question. When she looked at him, he saw in the growing twilight that her face was flushed, no doubt through the exertion of climbing to her seat.

"Waring?" She paused, and looked at him strangely. "Oh, yes. They live in the Boston Road, which is quite near here."

"Oh, thanks," he replied. "You have saved me the trouble of looking at the directory," he added, as the gig drove off.

* * * * * *

The next morning was glorious, even for early May, and Carew, after breakfasting at his hotel, did not feel in the least disposed to call on the Warings. The glimpse which he caught of the sea at the end of the street acted upon him like magic. He quickened his pace and walked towards the shore. That unpleasant business could wait.

From the artistic standpoint, his visit to Linthorpe was well-timed. There was no holiday crowd to distract his thoughts or disturb his reveries. Only a few stragglers were to be seen on the front, while away to the north, where the irregular line of the sand-hills faded into the horizon, there was perfect solitude to be had.

He walked briskly along the firm sands, and was soon comfortably seated on a sunny bank overgrown with long grasses and sea-thron, plying his pencil with enthusiasm. He began to feel that, in spite of that mad business of his uncle's, his sojourn at Linthorpe would not be wasted.

Why, it was an ideal place for the artist! On one hand, the sea with its ever-changing colours; on the other, the strangest landscape he had ever beheld—a grassy plain, flat as the palm of the hand, dotted here and there with long-armed windmills and the grey towers of village churches. He busied himself for hours, and only ceased sketching when his book was full. Then he remembered his lunch—and that Waring affair. Would he see this illusive Madge? he wondered. Would she burst upon his ravished eyes, a creature of peerless charm and grace? He must not think of such things. Such thoughts were treason to his imperious mistress, Art! He began, half-mechanically, to outline a girl's face on the cover of his sketch-book. When he had finished, he held it from him, and stared at it intently. Strange! It was wonderfully like the face of the girl in the train.

He closed the book hastily, for he heard the sound of approaching footsteps. Looking up, he saw the figure of a girl walking over the sand-hills. As she came nearer he stared at her in bewilderment, half doubting his senses. The newcomer was his travelling companion of the day before!

She was attired charmingly in a dress of creamy whiteness. From under the neatest of sailor hats a few curls had broken loose from their companions, and were blowing in the breeze.

She coloured slightly as she recognised Carew, but spoke with her usual frankness.

"So you could not resist this beautiful shore?" she said quickly. "I hope it has given you inspiration? It sadly wants an artist to 'discover' it. A poet"—she drew from her pocket a dainty edition of Tennyson—"has shown the way."

"Ah, yes, I remember," he said. "Locksley Hall is not far away, I believe?"

"Oh, no, quite near!" was her response. "I know it well, as I know most of the Tennyson country. Whenever my charges are away, and I am free to wander here by the sea, I am constantly trying to identify the local colour in the poems."

He noticed that her eyes were on his sketch-book.

"Perhaps you would like to see these rough pencillings of mine?" he said. "They are frightfully crude, and your interest in the scenes is my only excuse for showing them."

She glanced over the sketches with evident interest, and her praise of some of them was manifestly sincere. When she came to the end she paused, and then he remembered the girl's face on the cover.

Apparently she recognised it, for when she returned the book her cheeks had heightened in colour. She hastened to change the subject.

"You have seen your friends, I suppose?" she asked.

"The Warings? No!" he answered. "By-the-bye, I think you said last night that you know them?"

"I know Mrs. Waring very well and—her daughter. She is a widow."

"Who—the daughter?"

"Oh, no; how stupid of me! The mother, of course."

"I shall be seeing them to-night."

Here the sand-hills ended abruptly, and he could not further pursue the matter, for their ways lay in different directions.

As he watched her disappearing he was surprised at the strange sense of exhilaration which he felt. He put it down to the effect of the sea air. Of course it could not be that he was becoming captive to a pair of light-brown eyes! His vow of single service to Art precluded the bare possibility of such a thing. Still, he could not help reflecting that if the girl had only been Madge Waring, he might not have regarded his uncle's caprice as quite so unreasonable!

* * * * *

When he did call at the Warings that evening, the young

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lady who answered the door informed him that Mrs. Waring was out, but would be back shortly. Would he leave his card or step in and wait?

He fumbled in his pocket, only to discover that he had left his card-case behind him.

"My name is Carew," he said. "Philip Carew."

"Ah, yes," the girl replied. "You have an appointment with mamma, I believe—on a matter of business!"

He stared at her like a man in a dream. So this was Miss Waring! And she coolly referred to that dread compact as "a matter of business." She showed no agitation at the sight of him. The display of coolness under the circumstances was quite exasperating.

She showed him into the drawing-room with fine indifference, and as she was lighting the gas he had an opportunity of observing her. Certainly she was not a bad-looking girl, nor ill-proportioned either. But how did she compare with the fairy of the sand-hills? The sooner he got this wretched business off his mind the better.

Before he had any chance of sounding the conversational depths of this girl, whose fortunes were so closely bound up with his own, Mrs. Waring returned, and her daughter left them alone.

Mrs. Waring had evidently been prepossessing in her youth; even now a sad, refined beauty lingered about the lines of her face. Her kindly reception of Carew encouraged him to speak without restraint.

"You will admit, madam," he began, "that the position in which I am placed is, to say the least of it, somewhat curious. I awake one morning to find that an uncle, whom I scarcely knew, has left me the sum of £1,000 annually on condition that I marry a lady, whom I had not only never seen, but never even heard of. I am wholly in the dark as to the motive underlying this curious caprice."

"It was a strange whim, I admit," Mrs. Waring replied; "but your uncle was a strange man."

"You knew him then?"

"We were great friends when we were young—very great friends." A slight flush crept into the pallor of her cheeks. "But we parted and did not see each other for years. Latterly, however, Mr. Carew would often visit us here—the Linthorpe air suited him—and he took a great fancy to Madge."

That was all very well, Philip thought to himself, but uncles' fancies were not necessarily transmissible to their nephews.

"Did my uncle ever mention my name?" he asked. "I only saw him twice in my life; once, some ten years ago, when he wished me to take a position in his ironworks; and the second time about a year ago, when he visited my studio and gave me to understand that the profession of painting was only suited to the wastrels of life, and was, moreover, a short cut to perdition!"

"Those were not your uncle's real opinions," Mrs. Waring said, with some spirit. "In his heart, he had a great regard for you, and a high opinion of your talents. But he thought, for some reason or other, that you would be better off and altogether safer if you married and settled down. He had a brother once, I have heard, also an artist, whose career seemed to provide him with a warning example."

That must have been his improvident uncle Hugh, Philip reflected, from whom he was supposed to have inherited his own talent.

"There were other reasons besides—sentimental reasons if you like—which made your uncle desirous of having this match between a member of his family and a member of mine."

Again that becoming blush overspread her pale features. So all men had their romance, Philip thought—even his hard-headed uncle Christopher. Mrs. Waring waited for him to speak, but, for the life of him, he did not know how to begin. He was on very delicate ground.

"But what are your daughter's views?" he blurted out, in a voice that stumbled over the words. "Judging from appearances——"

"But you have not seen her."

"Why, she opened the door!"

Mrs. Waring smiled. "Ah, I see the mistake. That was my daughter Alice. Madge does not live at home. She is a governess at ——"

"A governess!" he exclaimed; "why, that must be——"

He paused, and Mrs. Waring looked at him astonishment.

"Do you mean, Mr. Carew, that you have met Madge?"

"For the life of me, I can't tell you, madam!"

Before Mrs. Waring had time to digest this unintelligible reply, a knock was heard at the door.

"That is Madge's knock, I am certain," said the old lady, and before she had finished speaking, Philip Carew had risen from his chair and rushed into the hall.

There stood Madge Waring, his fairy of the sand-hills, his travelling companion of the night before! She did not seem at all perturbed at the sight of him. Coolness ran in that family, he reflected.

"Yes, Mrs. Waring," he said, as he re-entered the drawing-room, "I have met your daughter before, but without knowing who she was. In that respect, I should imagine that she had the advantage of me."

"It was quite of your own doing, Mr. Carew," Madge replied. "You see artists don't come every day to Linthorpe; especially," she added slily, "artists who have business with a family of the name of Waring!"

"You might at least have disclosed your identity," he said, with mock resentment.

"How could I"—she paused and blushed—"under the circumstances?"

When they were alone he said to her:

"I don't know how you regard this strange business. For my part, I will be perfectly frank. I had fully intended to tell Miss Madge Waring of my uncle's will, whenever I might meet her, that my heart was not mine to give."

Her coolness had now quite disappeared. "Mr. Carew," she said, in an agitated voice, "do not labour under any misapprehension. I, too, had quite made up my mind to——"

"Pray allow me to finish," Philip interrupted. "I repeat I had intended to tell this lady my heart was not mine to give. That was the sober truth. The fact is, I half lost it in the train last night, and the loss was completed"—he imprisoned with his own, the hand which, in her excitement, she had placed upon his arm—"when I met the sweetest girl in the world on Linthorpe sand-hills this afternoon!"

Fred J. Cox.

All the Difference.

"WHY, Clara, you look radiant! What has happened?" "I've just received an invitation to a wedding." "Well, there's nothing particular in that to go into raptures over." "Yes, but it happens to be my own."

Part Confidence.

OLD FRIEND: "You should always take your wife into your confidence. Women appreciate that sort of thing." De Broker: "Oh, I do that; that is, in part." Old Friend: "You tell her of your gains and losses, I presume?" De Broker: "Um—I always tell her of my losses."

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THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Mysteries by R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "Hate, the Destroyer," "A Daughter of Mystery," "The Golden Dwarf," &c., &c.

THE AFFAIR ON THE PRINCE'S YACHT.

CHAPTER I.

"You May Have Seen My Husband."

"THE conveyance in which I came, sir, awaits us at the door, and I beg that you will accompany me with as little delay as possible. The affair is urgent."

Lucius Shand—the person to whom these somewhat haughty sentences were addressed—fingered deliberately his full, clean-shaven chin, and took a cool survey of the speaker. He was slightly-built and elegantly attired, and his dark, stiffly-waxed moustaches and close-cropped hair, no less than his marked accent, betrayed the foreigner. His pronunciation had enabled the quick ear of the divisional surgeon to identify him as an Italian.

"A moment," said Lucius Shand, thoughtfully, "I am not fond of unknown destinations and unspecified errands. Where do you wish to escort me, and for what purpose?"

The Italian glanced impatiently at the door of the surgeon's private room; he had but just entered the apartment, and was plainly anxious to leave it.

"I have told you," he replied, "that your professional services are needed immediately, and at no great distance from here. So long as your fee—which shall be anything you care to ask—is duly paid, why should you concern yourself further in the matter. However, I will answer your two inquiries, since you attach importance to them. I desire you to go with me at once on board the *Saturnia*, Prince Peschari's steam-yacht, which lies off the nearest of the riverside landings—there—there has been an—an accident."

"An accident of what nature?" demanded Lucius Shand, "that I must learn if I am to come prepared for dealing with it promptly."

"H'm!" responded the Italian, reflectively, "let us say that you may anticipate being confronted with an unquestionably severe type of chest wound."

The divisional surgeon raised his bushy brows as he turned from his visitor to gather some medical requisites into a hand-bag. This done, he picked up his hat, but paused with it halfway to his head.

"Why have you sought my aid?" he queried, "there are other and more prominent practitioners in the district."

The Italian shrugged his shoulders. "How should I know them?" was his response, "I am not familiar with this vile port of yours. I consulted a policeman, he mentioned your name, called me a cab, and here I am."

Lucius Shand seized his bag with an air of decision and opened the door by which he stood. "Very well," he said, "I am at your service."

He exchanged a few words with his assistant at the dispensing-counter outside, and looked at his watch. It was barely four o'clock, but the summer afternoon was lowering and overcast, as if by an impending storm. The surgeon's young colleague had had to set going a couple of gas-jets, by which to pursue his compounding of pills and draughts.

When Lucius Shand and the Italian strode forth into the street a few heavy drops of rain were splashing the pavement; they ceased almost immediately, the storm seemed in no hurry to break. As the two drove off in the visitor's hansom, a flash or two of lightning flared across the brooding sky, succeeded by the muffled reports of distant thunder.

Between the time that the surgeon and his guide mounted into their cab and its arrival at the jetty for which it was bound, the latter only spoke to offer Lucius Shand a cigarette. The surgeon declined it with a brief, abstracted acknowledgment. The Italian selected one of the dainty trifles, put a match to it, and puffed silently.

At the jetty a smart gig was rocking on the swells that rolled in among the wooden piles of the massive landing. Her crew were trimly clad in blue serge, and there was a suggestion of wealth and good taste about the elegant little craft. His guide motioned Lucius Shand, courteously enough, to step into her. The surgeon did so, the Italian imitated him, the gig was cast off, her prow swung clear of the jetty, and the oarsmen began to sweep her, with strong strokes, athwart the dingy mercantile river, under the sombre, storm-laden heavens.

Ahead of her, in the middle of the stream, was moored a handsome modern steam-yacht, with a slender black and gold hull, black funnels, and raking, square-rigged masts. She was flying the Italian flag. The gig made swiftly for her accommodation ladder, and Lucius Shand and his escort soon found themselves ascending it to the level of the principal deck.

The divisional surgeon studied the yacht critically as he passed up her side, crossed her snowy planking, and descended a spacious companion-way into a tiny but luxurious apartment, evidently intended to serve as an ante-chamber. Here Lucius Shand's guide recovered the use of his tongue.

"If you will excuse me for a short while," he remarked, "I will ascertain if your patient is ready to—to receive you."

Lucius Shand assented, and the other disappeared through a neighbouring exit, which he carefully closed, and, the surgeon fancied, locked behind him. The act excited Lucius Shand's curiosity, already sufficiently whetted; he chose a seat adjacent to the door in question and leant towards the upright crack between it and the posts of its frame. Nevertheless, in spite of his strained attention, he could hear for some time only the murmur of subdued voices. Suddenly a peculiar sound, not unlike a continuous, sustained hissing, penetrated to the surgeon. It was combined with another, such as might have been produced by the frequent movement of solidly-planted human feet.

Lucius Shand started, and then drew out a large knife and opened a substantial "picker," which formed part of it. Holding the knife as a carpenter holds a gimlet, he thrust the "picker," with a rotating motion, through the panelled partition of the cabin and put his eye to the resulting aperture.

His guess had been correct—the hissing sound was indeed the noise made by the long and supple blades of fencing foils as they slipped over each other, from point to hilt, in incessant feint and parry. Nor were these the harmless "buttoned" variety, common to the gymnasium, but the deadly, bodkin-ended species employed to-day only by Continental duellists.

"The dickens!" muttered Lucius Shand, "I was prepared to discover that there had been a duel, not that there was one in progress. What the deuce ought I to do? Mind my own

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business, I imagine—I'm not supposed to be able to see through an oaken partition and I can scarcely confess to my ingenious expedient of boring a hole."

He was studying the combatants as he murmured doubtfully to himself. The room beyond was a sort of smoking-saloon, illuminated by electric pendants, and having a parquetry flooring. On this, the duellists, relieved of their coats, vests, and collars, faced one another.

For a better purchase upon the smooth parquetry, they had discarded their shoes and fought in their stockinged feet, though the firmness that it was necessary to lend to each new position adopted by the combatants, caused the tell-tale sound which, mingled with the hissing of the foils, had reached the surgeon's ear.

The duellists were obviously well-matched. They were a tall, powerful, man with an aquiline nose and grizzled moustaches, and a slight, agile fencer with a sensitive pale face, contrasting oddly with his opponent's set, cold smile. The seconds and several additional onlookers stood just clear of the contest, silent, eager, absorbed in the struggle.

The fighting was being forced by the taller of the swordsmen, his antagonist seemed to be content with defending himself. Yet, as Lucius Shand watched, the former, lunging at his opponent, received the point of the latter's weapon in the flesh of his upper right arm. The seconds sprang in and the duel was interrupted.

"Now for my share of the business!" said the surgeon, putting his ear instead of his eye to the opening he had contrived. To his surprise there fell on it again the sound of the foils. He looked hastily, to perceive that the taller of the duellists, a handkerchief tied tightly about his right arm, was fencing with his left. The smile had not deserted his lips, and Lucius Shand noticed that his play was no less rapid and skilful than before. But the younger of the combatants was seriously inconvenienced by the change in his rival's sword-arm, and he gave ground reluctantly, inch by inch.

The surgeon was lost in the excitement of the moment when a footstep on the companion-way, which led down to the apartment where he was, caused him unwillingly to abandon his peep-hole, and fling himself into a seat. A woman was descending the stair which sloped from the deck above. She was a pronounced brunette, slender, graceful, olive-skinned, with delicate Italian features and a proud, girlish face. Observing Lucius Shand she bowed, the surgeon returned the bow.

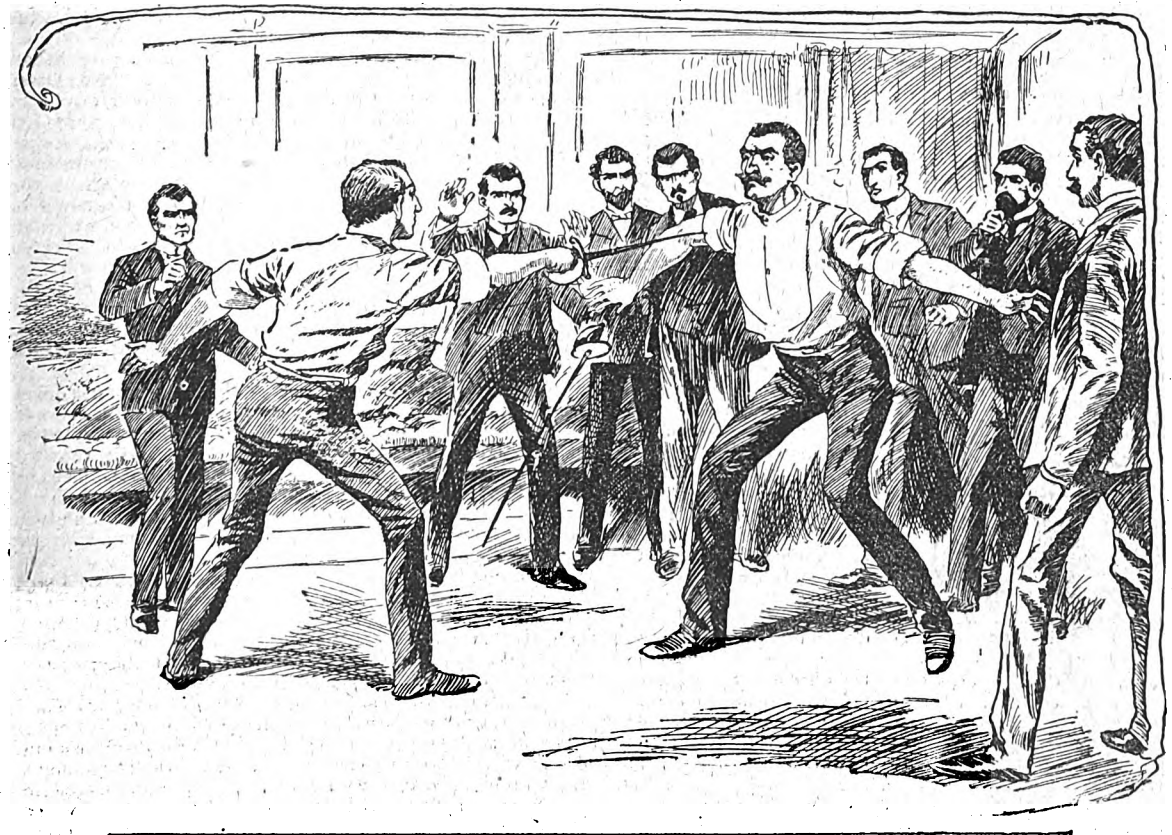
"I beg your pardon," she said, "I did not know there was anyone here. But perhaps you may have seen my husband, that is, Mr. Secco. Are you staying on board? I am sorry not to be acquainted with all my father's guests, but I can tell you are English. Is there a large party?—My husband and I are only passing visitors, we live in this part of the country."

"And I also," answered Lucius Shand, "but I am not even a chance visitor; I was waiting to—to see Prince Peschari, I believe, with reference to a—a professional matter."

"Ah," was the friendly reply, "then it is my husband who is keeping you—and me also. I have actually had to come in search of him. He is with my father—the Prince, that is."

She stopped and put her hand to her bosom; the sibilant murmur of the foils had arrested her attention.

"What is that?" she whispered, alarmed, "listen!—it is



The former, lunging at his opponent, received the point of the latter's weapon in the flesh of his upper right arm.

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in there, the ring of swords." And she would have darted to the door, but Lucius Shand interposed pityingly.

"Some of the Prince's guests practising," he said, with ready self-possession. The girl's colour returned and she forced a laugh.

"Of course—of course!" she stammered, "how foolish of me! But my husband was wounded once in a duel with swords, and the sound of fencing always makes me feel faint. I——"

A dull thud broke into the sentence—the noise of a heavy fall. A deep groan followed it. An agonised scream burst from the girl's throat and she leapt towards the inner exit from the ante-chamber. Ere she reached it, it swung wide, and the youthful Italian who had summoned Lucius Shand to the yacht appeared on the threshold.

"Doctor," he said drily, "your patient is ready for you." He stopped and recoiled, noticing the other occupant of the small room. "Donna Margherite!" he faltered, but the girl had sprung past him and thrown herself upon the body of the defeated duellist. He was the shorter and slighter of the two combatants, and he lay motionless upon the parquetry floor of the saloon.

"Carlo! Carlo!" she moaned, "speak to me, speak to me—tell me that you are not dead!" There was no response, and the duellist's wife rose on her knees, staring about her. "Who—who has done this?" she said hoarsely, in a low, strange voice.

A tall figure with a grey moustache stalked to her side, still carrying in a lean left hand, a supple foil.

"I," it answered coolly, "your father, Margherite, has avenged himself."

A terrible cry pierced the air; the girl reeled and dropped to the floor—she had swooned, almost instantaneously. Lucius Shand was bending over her husband.

CHAPTER II.
"Obey Me Implicitly."

"A LITTLE more brandy, Carter—easy, easy, he only needs the merest fillip! That's enough."

The divisional surgeon motioned away the glass that his assistant had been holding to the lips of the wounded duellist. Their patient lay in an arm-chair in Lucius Shand's private room, and the surgeon was overhauling the bandages that he had placed, some half-hour earlier, on the former's chest.

"Is he seriously hurt, sir?" asked the wondering assistant, setting down the glass.

"Fourth rib on the right side laid bare over half its anterior pectoral surface," replied Lucius Shand, "he went off with the pain—he's all nerves and not particularly robust. He recovered consciousness in the cab, but fainted again after a question or two. S—sh, he's coming round."

Their patient had indeed sighed, he stirred, and, with a suppressed groan, sat up, gazing about him. His glance fixed on the divisional surgeon.

"Doctor," he said vaguely, "have I been dreaming, or did you tell me that my wife had been left on board the yacht?"

"That is so," answered Lucius Shand, "I was informed that she was to be sent on shore as soon as she was fit. Your escapade has a little upset her—she—she got wind of it."

The other rose resolutely to his feet. "I'm all right now doctor," he intimated, "you said my wound wasn't dangerous—if I remember our conversation in the cab."

"With care," objected the surgeon, "*and* quiet. I confess, however, Mr.—Mr. Secco, that I took the liberty of warning your friend, or rather father-in-law, that you could not live more than a few hours; he imagines you run through the right lung and the liver."

"Why did you do that?" demanded the Italian, abruptly. Lucius Shand frowned.

"I hate duelling," he said, "and but that professional confidence prevents my acting as an ordinary citizen, I should communicate with the police. Though I suppose, being Italian and having fought under the Italian flag, you could only be prosecuted with the Government's consent. But I hate murder even more than duelling, and Prince Peschari's left-handed play was nothing less than murder."

"You saw the fight?" gasped the other, "I did not know you were present."

"My view," admitted the surgeon, "was obtained through a fortunate aperture. But that is not the question—the point is, what do you wish me to do? I agreed to bring you off to my surgery, with the assistance of some discreet servants from the yacht, and to communicate with your friends, whose addresses I was given. Not that I should have mixed myself up with the affair at all, had I not known that you would recover, and—well, had I not suspected a romance behind everything, and been sorry for your wife."

"My wife!" repeated the Italian, "so she is aware that I am wounded—she believes, no doubt, fatally. Good Heavens, what agony she must be suffering—what agony she will suffer!"

"You should have thought of that before you consented to engage in such an idiotic thing as a duel," said Lucius Shand. His patient turned on him indignantly.

"Do you imagine I would willingly take part in an encounter with my wife's father?" he cried. "No, I was compelled to fight by the threats and cowardly insults of Prince Peschari and his friends. It was for that purpose I and my wife had been decoyed on board the yacht, it was with that object the *Saturnia* called here. Your presence was simply to lend an air of correctness to the affair—the Prince knew that he could wound me beyond the power of medical skill to heal (he is one of the best swordsmen in Italy) and so he would have done, had not his foil swerved on a rib instead of piercing my chest."

The Italian drew a painful breath. "Not that I am a poor swordsman," he added; "only a year or two ago, for Margherite's sake, I fought with Count Pelligri, the young fellow who came for you, and, though I was slightly wounded in the struggle, I disabled him for three months."

He made an impatient gesture. "My wife!" he exclaimed, "it is her we must think of, she is in the Prince's power, the power of an autocratic Italian father, and on a swift steam-yacht. They will immure her in some lonely castle, they will tell her I am dead, they will believe it themselves." He sat down despairingly and hid his face.

Lucius Shand looked significantly at his assistant, and the latter withdrew. The surgeon laid a gentle hand on the Italian's shoulder.

"Mr. Secco," he said, "you can trust me safely. Something of this I suspected, but you and your life had to be my first care. I saw that you had stood merely on the defensive, and that enlisted my sympathy, no less than your wife's grief. Tell me, are you residents in Great Britain, or only visitors?" His patient glanced up hopefully.

"Residents," said the Italian, "but, alas! not naturalised. I am Carlo Secco, the eldest son of a well-known Neapolitan merchant. A year ago I eloped with Prince Peschari's only daughter, and married her in England. He is a haughty Italian noble and vowed vengeance. Tempted by a proffered reconciliation, Margherite and I visited the *Saturnia*. The rest you know or can guess. By now the yacht will be on her way down the river."

Lucius Shand pondered the situation. "You've got yourself

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Carlo Secco leapt in and clasped his wife in his arms.

into a corner, Mr. Secco. Out of England your marriage is not valid, and by the Italian law, your wife, while unmarried, has little freedom from paternal control."

"I know, I know," groaned Carlo Secco, "all is lost." The surgeon's response was to seize his patient's wrist and feel his pulse. This done, he thrust a thermometer under the Italian's tongue and took his temperature.

"You're a fairly healthy subject, Mr. Secco," he said, "but for your nerves; and you are not, so far, much the worse for your wound, now the shock has passed off. If you'll keep cool, *very* cool, we'll have a shot at getting your wife back. You will obey me implicitly?"

"I am your slave from this moment," promised Carlo Secco, eagerly. Lucius Shand buttoned his patient's coat and handed him his hat.

"Come," he said. They went out into the street together, Mr. Carter watching them amazedly, and got into a convenient hansom. The surgeon gave an address and the vehicle went off in the same direction as that which bore Lucius Shand, three-quarters of an hour before, to the river-side. The storm which had been impending all the afternoon had broken and a steady downpour, the sequel to a tropical deluge, descended upon the town.

Near the line of the docks the surgeon alighted, helped his patient out, paid the fare, and led him towards a small floating stage, whereon was a white wooden block of buildings, with a curious tower. From the top of this fluttered a long pennant and on the wall of the ground-floor a lettered board intimated that they had arrived at a depôt of His Majesty's Customs. Moored to the front of the stage was a rough yet powerful launch, whose fine hull and large engines showed her to be a veritable greyhound.

Lucius Shand escorted the Italian into a waiting-room, and himself scaled a narrow flight of stairs. When he returned, there were with him several shrewd, stalwart men in a naval looking uniform. These last crossed the waiting-room to a cupboard, and began to equip themselves with water-proofs and sou'-westers, for the rain still pattered loudly on the windows and leaden roof of the place. The divisional surgeon stepped to the side of Carlo Secco.

"The *Saturnia* went down the river twenty minutes ago," he murmured. "I have given a bogus piece of information that her steward has a large quantity of valuable wines concealed aboard, and that he has been smuggling them ashore at various places. The chief officer is a friend of mine, and he knows it is only a blind, but they must have some excuse for pursuing her. So say nothing to anyone, and I'll pass you on the launch as an inquisitive acquaintance."

The Italian wrung the fingers of Lucius Shand. The surgeon released them smilingly, and went to borrow a set of oil-skins for himself and his patient. Then, effectually disguised in huge coats and waterproof caps, they hurried out

on to the stage, and joined the Customs' officials in their launch.

The little vessel backed away from her berth, put on all steam, and darted down the dingy stream in the drenching rain. The Customs' officers balanced themselves on her cramped deck, clinging to whatever might serve to steady them. For a quarter of an hour she drove onward in the wind and the wet. Lucius Shand was talking gravely with the chief inspector. Suddenly a long green and white cutter impelled by eight oars, shot across their course.

"By Jupiter!" said the divisional surgeon to his friend in command, "the police boat. Let us hail them and tell them to follow us. They would be useful if we encountered any—ahem!—resistance."

"Very well," was the cheerful rejoinder; "in for a penny, in for a pound." The speaker made a motion to the engineer, a blast shrieked from the launch's steam-pipe, and she drew over to the cutter. A few words passed between the sergeant-in-charge and the chief of the Customs' officials, the police boat was brought round, and proceeded at a slower speed.

Ten minutes later the launch was overtaking the Italian yacht, which, with a sail or two close-hauled, was making all speed towards the mouth of the river.

The Customs' boat whistled to her to stop, and displayed clearly her official flag. For a while the yacht held on her way, but more prudent counsels prevailed; she stopped her engines and came up into the wind. The Customs' officials boarded her, and climbed to her dripping deck. The tall man, who had played so deadly a part in the duel witnessed by Lucius Shand, approached them.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion," he said haughtily; "do you know that I am Prince Peschari, and that this is my private yacht?"

The chief inspector composed his features into a look of official severity, and glanced at the surgeon. Lucius Shand had buried himself in his oilskins and sou'-wester. So had Carlo Secco, prompted by a covert hint from his companion.

"We are sorry to detain your Excellency," replied the inspector, gravely; "but we have information that your steward has a quantity of valuable wines concealed aboard, and that he has been landing them surreptitiously at various British ports in the course of your tour. I'm afraid we shall have to search the vessel."

The Prince stamped irritably on the deck. "As you will," he said. "It is an absurd allegation; my steward is an old and trusted servant, and I do not credit your story in the least. But, however, you may satisfy yourselves."

Solemnly the Customs officers addressed themselves to their search. Lucius Shand and the Italian (who by now had realised the effectiveness of the surgeon's ruse) keeping at the elbow of the chief. Thorough as was the investigation, they found no sign of that which they were most anxious to unearth, the Prince Peschari's daughter. At length they paused before a small locked door forming the extremity of a corridor.

"That is a lady's cabin," explained their guide, a superior servant; "doubtless she has locked it herself from within."

"Quite so," retorted Lucius Shand; "but His Britannic Majesty's Customs must do its duty. Madam," he added, raising his voice, "we are loth to disturb you, but a party of British Customs' officers desire to search your cabin."

A cry of joy was the response, and the latch rattled vainly. "You are English!" exclaimed a musical voice, broken by the sound of a sob. "Oh, please, please, force the door open. I did not lock it. I want to get out."

Carlo Secco sprang at the panels with desperate energy. "Margherite!" he called, "Margherite! It is I, Carlo, your husband; you are saved, you are saved."

The surgeon drew back gently his impulsive client, got out his knife, put its most powerful blade into the crack of the door, and forced it over. The door swung ajar, Carlo Secco leapt in and clasped his wife in his arms, just as the Prince came frowningly into the corridor, accompanied by a group of his friends. The alarmed servant had hastened to summon him. Lucius Shand glanced from the porthole—the police boat was hooking on to the yacht's side.

"Explain this outrage!" he said coldly. The surgeon threw wide his oilskin coat, doffed his sou'-wester, and pointed smilingly to the interior of the cabin. The Prince recognised his resuscitated son-in-law, and a curse broke from his lips as he strode towards him. Lucius Shand barred his entrance.

"You are out-played, Prince Peschari," he announced; "already a boatful of police is boarding your yacht. You do not threaten us with violence, I suppose. Stand back, sir, and permit this lady to regain the protection of the British flag, from which you have so unscrupulously torn her. Look!"

The Prince followed the direction of the surgeon's forefinger through the open porthole. It indicated the file of sturdy river police that were mounting the *Saturnia's* accommodation ladder. A terrible oath was the only answer, and then, with a sign to his compatriots, he stepped sullenly from the corridor. Before long the Italian and his wife were speeding up the river on the Customs' launch, while the yacht, cheated of her prize, pursued her course down it.

"All's well that ends well," said Lucius Shand to them; "but I wouldn't make this little incident public property. At least, not until my friend of the Customs here has retired on his pension—it might get him into trouble. We've all been bluffing shockingly, and doing things the law would by no means back us up in."

"And you," answered the pretty Italian girl; "will you also be in danger of trouble for having been so kind to us."

The surgeon looked thoughtfully at the golden evening that was closing in upon the river after the day of storm.

"Faith," he rejoined, "I don't know and I don't care. What Irishman worthy of the name wouldn't chance his luck for a lady's sake. But see, the sun is shining on us royally; let us all take it for a good omen."

AN EXPLANATION. . . . .

Last week I promised my readers that in the next number of *Short Stories* I would commence the publication of a series of true stories, written by a young girl of good birth, who for some years was lady's companion to a well-known Society lady. During the whole of the time that she acted in this capacity, Cynthia (the lady's companion) was absolutely ignorant of the true character of the woman she served, and not until just before leaving her service did she suspect her of the series of crimes of which she was guilty. Being thrown on her own resources, Cynthia has been forced to make money by writing, with the result that these remarkable articles came into my hands.

And now I have to apologise to readers for an unforeseen delay. After the articles had been accepted and put into type, I received a letter from the authoress, inclosing a newspaper cutting dealing with the arrest of a Society woman for alleged embezzlement, and pointing out to me that the woman in custody was her late employer.

I have taken counsel's opinion, and I am told that I must postpone publication of the articles until the case has been through the courts, and the woman either acquitted or condemned. As the case comes on about the end of May, I hope that the first article will appear in *Short Stories* for June 14th. I am sure, however, that my readers will feel greater interest than ever in the true stories, when they do appear. THE EDITOR.

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THE PROPOSAL.

Bed and floor were littered with satin shoes, silk petticoats, bright sashes, gloves, opera cloaks, and all that went to produce the untidyness of Ilma's bedroom before a dance. She was just twenty—the eldest of three sisters.

Agatha, the youngest, was balanced on the end of the bed in great spirits, offering advice in a high-pitched tone.

Terese, the middle one, was sewing a button on to a tan glove.

"I wish I were out," said Agatha; "I do adore dancing."

"Oh, time enough. Wait until you know a little more geography and history," said Terese.

"I'm sure, I don't feel a bit inclined to go," Ilma began, with a sigh. "I don't see much pleasure in meeting new people, and talking for only ten minutes with each. I wish it were the fashion to divide one's programmes into three sections, and give six dances each to three men."

"You would have nothing to talk to them about all that time," said Terese.

"It is the other way about," answered Ilma. "I've too much to say, or they have not enough. Men at dances sit back and expect you to do all the talking, and think it is they who are amusing you, whilst you make yourself hot and hoarse with descriptions of plays and books, tell all your private opinions and family affairs without meaning to, and you are left with a horrid, empty, pumped-out sensation, so that you hope you will never meet them again. I wonder if all girls feel the agony of pauses and silence as much as I do? I can't resist filling them up, and then say things that I am sorry for, and end by knowing nothing—absolutely nothing—about my partner. Not that I want to; but he knows all about me."

"First you grumble at the dances being too short, and then you say that you disgrace yourself by talking so much. Why talk at all?" suggested Terese.

"Because I know it would kill me not to; but whether my partners are nice or dull to-night I am not going to talk. I shall try to be another type of girl. I want something new—a proposal. Wouldn't that be exciting?"

The sisters stared with interested surprise.

"I think a proposal, if you were laughing at the man, would be most unwholesome and uncomfortable," said Terese.

"It would be heavenly," exclaimed Agatha.

"I think I'll try to-night. I believe I've stopped seven men from proposing by putting them off because I did not love them. I never have loved any of them—at least, I don't think I have—Arthur was the nearest approach—so I showed it, and they did not propose. But I shall pretend, and look as though I meant a lot. I want a real proposal. Others have had several at my age."

"Will you let him kiss you?" inquired Agatha, with wide open eyes.

"N-n-o, I won't let him do that—unless I mean to marry him; but I will allow him to propose."

"You would have to dance with him all the evening before he could reach such fever heat as that."

"I'm sure I could make someone do it in four dances!" answered Ilma.

"Only four!" gasped Agatha.

"Four ought to be ample, I consider."

"Supposing he does propose, will you refuse him at once?" asked Agatha.

"No. I shall tell him I will write next day, when I have thought the matter over."

Ilma found herself at the dance by a quarter to ten, having promised to wake up her sisters and relate particulars on her return. It was not very long before she discerned a handsome partner, with whom she had established a friendly footing at two previous balls. She must catch his eye and bow, instead of waiting, as was her habit, until she should be discovered, or her programme would be overrun with indifferent creatures. He was at her side in an instant.

"This is a pleasure," he said; "I hope I am not too late?"

"I have five and six."

"May I say both?"

"Oh, both?" she answered innocently. "Well, yes, of course!"

"Might I have another?"

"Do you mean a third?" showing him her programme.

"Yes, if you please. I see you are not engaged for No. 10, may I have that?"

"Ten or twelve—which?" and she looked sweetly at him.

"Or twelve?" he echoed. "But how can I choose? It is too difficult. Let me say both again."

She blushed. She saw that he really wanted them, and she agreed.

"Thank you," he said pleasantly; "I will look for you here."

The rest of her card filled up very soon, but no one else was given more than two.

She could see that he liked her. This was a good begnning. Then the meanness of it all made her despise herself and she thought of withdrawing. He was not a man who trifles with girls; but he showed a light-hearted gallantry towards women, and there was an honest high-mindedness about him that put to shame her petty plans.

But, then, it was only a joke, and the girls at home would be scornful and disappointed if she returned with no result for her enterprise. So the thirst for a real proposal took possession of her, and she made a final resolution to see the thing through.

She managed very well during numbers five and six, and decided to sit out numbers ten and twelve.

It was with dread that she met him when number ten arrived.

"Which chair will you take?" he asked when they had found a retired nook.

"I like the one with cushions best," she replied.

He seated himself beside her. She said nothing. He was to amuse her, so with a soft self-surrender, she left the conversation to him.

"What do you think of the band to-night?" he said, by way of a beginning.

"I don't know," she answered, gazing apathetically before her with dreamy blue eyes.

Other subjects were broached with as negative results.

He was perplexed. What had come over the girl? He knew she could not be in earnest, and yet she was stolid and unbending. Perhaps she did not consider him worth talking to. Anyway, he could look at her, for no one could be uninteresting with such a charming face.

He turned to obtain a view of the girl before him. Her hair, from which there peeped two pink rosebuds, shone golden-brown, and little stray curls fell over her forehead and round her ears in a soft, indefinite halo. There was a gentle, thoughtful expression in her face, of which he only gained a side view, for her head was bent, and her eyes were fixed on her fan. The long lashes curled upwards, and high colour burnt in her cheek. He noticed the dainty black satin dress—the spray of pink roses over her shoulder, and the rose sash round her waist. He could not help comparing all this with the whiteness of her neck and arms, and the graceful line of her skirt. She was wholly unaffected now—and he realised that she was beautiful.

"Have you any idea what dance is on?" she asked.

"Number twelve has just commenced," he replied, as he re-pocketed his programme.

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"I must go back to the dancing-room at once," she said, rising. "I am engaged for number twelve."

"Yes, to me!" he returned; "shall we dance it?"

She looked at her card. "Oh, dear! See what I have done."

He drew her by the arm gently down into her chair beside him.

"Never mind," he said; "you've only cut number eleven. It is too late to go back now. He will be with his next partner; and this is my dance, you know."

"I must explain and tell him I forgot. He will think I did it on purpose; and I would not for anything. Oh, I am very sorry!"

"It is my fault," he confessed. "I will tell him so. I lost count."

"No; I will explain myself. He will not be offended. He knows me well—is one of my best partners. He will forgive me."

"Who wouldn't? I wish I had such a chance."

"Do you?" she answered, with a pretence at getting up. "Shall I hide through number twelve, so that you may forgive me afterwards?" Her eyes twinkled.

He laughed. "No! Stay where you are—I see I am the lucky one, after all."

She leant back on the cushions. A pause ensued. There was only half a dance left!

Evidently this thought occurred to him too. "Are all your dances engaged right up to end—up to eighteen?"

"I am afraid so," she answered. "I must go soon."

Their eyes met for an instant. He leant over the arm of her chair, and played with her sash.

"You were so strange at the beginning of the evening," he faltered. "I couldn't make you out—thought I must have made a fool of myself or something the last time we met. Did I?"

"Why, no!" she answered.

"That's right," he went on. Then his manner changed. "Do you know," he said in an earnest way, as though making a confession, "I tried to please you—to make you like me that night, and I believed, by your manner a little time back, that I had failed altogether."

Her conscience smote her. "Ah! no. You were like the clever woman," answered she, in the hopes of self-excuse, "for your good points lay beneath the light exterior."

"Did they? I mean did you really think so?" His eyes shone.

"I hoped so," she corrected.

"Did you? I am glad you hoped so—Miss—Miss—may I know your Christian name?"

"Ilma," she answered.

"Ilma!" he echoed, and then half to himself, "Ilma! It is the only name that could have been yours. It is a lovely name—so soft. So sweet to say. Ilma!"

A smile flickered round her lips. For the moment he was unconscious of her presence. He seemed to be raptly watching her in his mind in association with the name.

"Ilma!" he said suddenly, so that her heart jumped.

That began it all—a rush of words—his prospects; he was the eldest son—heir to an estate—his wonderful admiration for her. "I have only met you three times, but I have known you always. Last month, when I met you first, I knew I had known you always. I must speak at once while I am with you. To-morrow I go into the country for months, perhaps, and this is our last dance——"

"For to-night," she interrupted.

"I mean our last to-night," he agreed. "I—well—plainly, I love you, Ilma—have loved you always"—he twisted her sash end up into a little tight ball. "I am afraid I have no chance—I know it—but will you just love me—a little, even if you won't marry me."

He held her hand and pressed it as he spoke.

"Say yes—say you will," he whispered.

It had come; her brain whirled, and words failed her. She was living through his anxiety and her own remorse—her pulses raced each other.

"Don't don't!" she begged brokenly. "I wish—I wish you hadn't."

It was true. She was miserably sorry. His love now lying at her feet, seemed some sacred treasure, wonderful and shining, which she dared not touch even to restore it into his own keeping.

"Why do you wish that?" he asked softly. "You have promised someone else. Tell me, or have I no right to ask?"

"You have only met me three times," she suggested tremulously; "you cannot know me enough."

"Once settled it," he replied; "I vowed when I had known you an hour to propose at my first opportunity, if you did not appear to hate me."

She felt sick and cold.

"Say something."

She heard his voice vaguely as though very distant and far away.

"I think I am a little faint." She raised her hand to her forehead. It was cold and damp.

He drew her arm through his own in a masterful way. "Are you sure you can walk?" he inquired.

"Oh, quite," she replied—adding, "With your help."

He smiled gratefully, and they made their way to the ball-room.

She soon found her chaperon, who met her with an airy, "You are looking pale, dear. Make it good-night. You will be better tucked up in bed than dancing if you feel tired. Thank you, Mr. Monteith, if you will put her into her carriage—so good of you. Ah, Sir George, you here? I'm looking younger than ever? Nonsense. But you always say the right thing, don't you now; so generous. We like—ah yes, we like it. Each hoping that the compliment may be true."

She hurried away.

Ilma went for her wraps and they met in the hall. Roger put the cloak over her shoulders, opened the brougham door and wrapped the rug round her knees. Then, with one foot on the step, he took her hand and began pulling off her glove.

"I go away to-morrow, or rather to-day, at one o'clock," he said, practically. "Here is my address for the next three days. Perhaps you could send me a line if it is one way—or if not, I will know what you mean, of course. This is my ring. I am going to put it on your finger to remind you of—of to-night. You don't mind? It is a little large for you, isn't it?"

He raised her hand to his lips.

"Good-night," he said. And as he looked up her eyes were full of tears. "Ilma, my darling girl."

"Good-night," as steadily as she could. She turned her head away and began absently to read the address he had given her.

He shut the door and was left with uncovered head in the moonlight, gazing after the brougham as it rolled out of sight.

* * * * * *

She let herself in with a latchkey. The house was still as death—save for the clock, which ticked so loudly that she feared it must wake everyone. There was a light in the hall, which she switched off, and proceeded to feel her way silently upstairs. In order not to be heard, she took off her shoes and stole upwards with calculated movement

She reached the first landing in safety, but alas! Terese's boots had been put outside, and sure enough, Ilma tripped over them.

"Is that you?" called a drowsy voice. "Early, aren't you? Enjoy yourself?"

"Yes, very much. Don't bother to wake up."

"Did you put the light out downstairs?"

"Yes, dear; good-night!"

"Night," drowsed Terese; "shut the door after you."

She was obviously too sleepy to question or even remember the evening's escapade. So far so good.

Ilma continued the perilous ascent, but when she neared Agatha's room there came the excited cry:

"Ilma, I'm awake—come in and tell me about it."

"It's too late. Wait till to-morrow."

She looked in through the half-open door and saw Agatha sitting up in bed—the light full on—with pink cheeks, wide, dancing eyes and curl rags tied in little, tight nobs standing wildly out all round her head.

"No, I can't. Don't make me, I've waited ever since you went. Besides, it's to-morrow now. Did he? Oh, tell me?"

"Who—what?"

"Did he propose in the romantic, proper way?"

Ilma writhed. "Yes, he did; now go to sleep!"

"What fun! Don't go; tell me what he said. Did you do it in four dances?"

"Well, in four dances and a half."

"You clever girl. Without kissing him too, or did you kiss him?"

"No, I did not, of course," Ilma answered.

"And we will write and refuse him? What is his name? Do you think it will break his heart?"

"I don't know how he will take it. His name is Roger Monteith. Now that is all. I am tired, Agatha, I must go now."

"You are slow, I thought you would be so thrilling," moaned the enthusiast. "Roger Monteith—it has a nice, romantic sound. But I suppose I must wait. You don't know, I might be dead when I wake up, or anything, by the morning." She curled herself down among the bedclothes.

"Yes, that's right," said Ilma. "It's so late, you know."

The lively head popped out again. "Well, I'm glad you made him propose—very glad. I bet Terese a box of chocolates that you would. She will be wild."

"Go to sleep, child; though you look as if nothing on earth would make you. Out with the light. Good-night. Shall I shut the door?"

"No," cried Agatha, with nervous warmth; "no, leave it open. You know I can't bear it shut."

Turning into her own room, Ilma swung the programme over the looking glass, and undressed as quickly as possible. With a tired sigh she sank into her soft, warm bed, but her mind was at work, and her heart so troubled that sleep did not come for quite an hour.

It was late in the afternoon. Rays of the setting sun streamed through the window. Terese was shopping, Agatha not yet back from school. Ilma, silent and alone, was seated at the writing-table in the library, gazing at the envelope newly addressed, in her own firm hand-writing—with the end of a pen between her little white teeth.

"If that is posted to-night he will receive it to-morrow morning," she thought.

All day she had been pre-occupied; shutting herself up in remote rooms, composing and tearing up half-finished notes. Agatha had gone off at nine o'clock, so the conversation of the early morning had not yet been renewed, much to Ilma's relief. Just now she was feeling rather shy and happy—perhaps a little important, too, having answered all on her own responsibility. She wondered how she would find sufficient courage to tell the family, and what they would say—if they would pass it off with a laugh, or her father tease her for letting the poor fellow into it. Or perhaps they would be pleased.

How different all looked now. His love and sincerity were so obvious. Her little beginnings had, after all, not brought the end about—they more likely had hindered it; he himself, had said as much—for he had loved her in an hour, whilst she—well, she kissed his seal ring now on her finger and blushed to herself.

She took up her letter and eyed it with keen interest. In the middle of it her glance fell on the blotting-pad, over which she realised she had been experimentally scribbling "Ilma," "Roger," "Mrs. Ilma," "Mr. and Mrs. Monteith," close together, and with guilty haste she tore it off and burnt it.

Just then the maid entered and laid an evening paper on the table.

"I feel inclined for something sensational or sentimental!" thought Ilma. She unfolded it and ran her eyes down from one heading to another.

"Whilst cycling on the Grosvenor Road shortly after noon to-day, Mr. Roger Monteith lost control of his bicycle descending a hill, and was thrown off with great violence. When picked up he was found to have sustained concussion of the brain and other injuries. He was removed to the local hospital, where he has since died."

She read without flinching to the end—when the paper fell from her hand, which had become too cold and lifeless to hold it. There could be no question as to its truth—the whole statement was plain to a ghastly degree.

There came a patter of feet and an approaching rustle of skirts. The library door was flung open, and Agatha burst in, fresh, fair, and fifteen.

"At last I have found you!" she cried, as she dashed her hat and books into an arm chair. "I have been thinking of it all school time, and lost ten marks for inattention. I can tell you ever so many ways now of saying 'no' to Roger Monteith. Oh you mean wretch!" She had caught sight of the envelope. "You've gone and refused him without our help, and you promised, too!"

The sun glared on to the envelope, and fell over Agatha's glittering hair.

Ilma, like one frozen, rose, and with a cold hand lifted the dead answer from the table and dropped it into the fire.

"There is no need to send it now," she said.

In a moment Agatha's eyes and voice were full of trouble and anxiety. She looked at her sister anxiously.

"What's the matter? There is something the matter. I can see it."

The flames caught the letter, and it blazed up. In the strong light the young girl noticed, with strange misgivings, her blanched set countenance.

"Oh what is it? Are you very ill?"

Ilma shook her head.

She knelt by Ilma's chair, and took both her hands.

"A man's ring!" she breathed, with bewilderment.

Ilma started, and the ice was broken. With a stifled cry she threw her arms round her sister's neck, and hid her tears in the soft curls.

"Help me! Tell me what to do!" she sobbed, in tragic grief. "Oh, Agatha, Agatha, he can never know, for I can never send him my answer now."

A. B. O.

LOOK OUT FOR THE HONEYSUCKLE AND THE BEE ON NEXT WEEK'S COVER.

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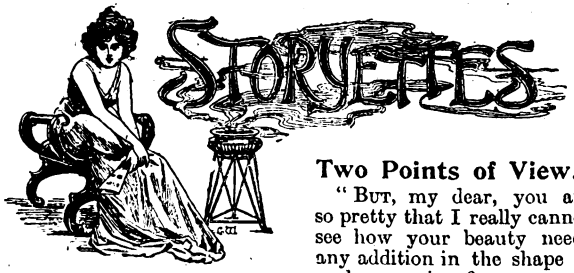

Two Points of View.

"BUT, my dear, you are so pretty that I really cannot see how your beauty needs any addition in the shape of such expensive finery as you wish," said Mr. Wickwire. "Oh, indeed!" said Mrs. Wickwire. "If I were as pretty as you pretend I am, I would not have to argue so to get a new dress."

Another Matter.

"WIFE," said a man, looking for his razor-case, "I have places where I keep my things, and you ought to know it." "Yes," she said, "I ought to know where you keep your late hours."

Easily Managed.

MRS. BILLUS: "John, the doctor says I need a change of climate." Mr. Billus (absorbed in his paper): "That's all right, Maria. The weather forecast says it's going to be twenty degrees colder to-morrow."

Nice for the Major.

THE MAJOR (rocking Nelly on his knee, for Aunt Mary's sake): "I suppose this is what you like, Nelly?" Nelly: "Yes, it's very nice; but I rode on a real donkey yesterday—I mean with four legs, you know."

Still Hope.

"AND who would have thought that I should ever be the mother of a poet?" exclaimed Mrs. Plainfield proudly. "Oh, well, I wouldn't worry about that!" replied her neighbour, misunderstanding. "He'll have better sense when he's older."

Altered His Mind.

HE: "My dear, I believe I shall sell a piece off our frontage." She: "Why, Charlie? You said when you bought the place you would never sell an inch of that lovely lawn, even if we were starving." He: "My love, at that time I had never had any experience in running a lawn mower."

How He Won.

"I HOPE you will excuse my delay, Mr. Jones," she said sweetly; "but I must confess I ran up to my room to look into the mirror a moment before seeing you." "You are quite excusable, Miss Fair. A lady with a face so attractive, may well be excused for wanting to look at it occasionally." Miss Fair is never out to Mr. Jones when he calls.

What He Needed.

"WHY don't you call me a donkey, and have done with it? You've hinted at it long enough," he snarled out. "It wouldn't be quite true," she replied. "I suppose not. I suppose I haven't ears enough for that animal," he retorted sarcastically. "Oh, yes, you have," she returned sweetly. "You don't need any more ears." "What do I need then?" "More legs and a better voice."

To Help Her Memory.

"I SHALL be away a whole year, so I must give you a keepsake, my pet," he said, drawing a rather insignificant ring off his little finger. "It's not much, Charlie, is it?" she remarked. "No, darling. But it isn't the intrinsic value of the thing that——" "Of course not, dearest," she hurriedly interposed. "But, my own, if you could manage to give me a diamond ring I should be so glad. You see, dear, if I had a diamond ring I should always be looking at it, and that would make me think of you; and I do so want to think of you when you're away."

The Suitor Retired.

ELDERLY MAIDEN (out rowing with a possible suitor and her little sister, who is frightened by the waves): "Theodora, if you are so nervous now, what will you be at my age?" Little Sister (meekly): "Thirty-seven, I suppose."

Knew What He Wanted.

TRAMP: "It is needless to ask you the question, madam. You know what I want." Lady: "Yes, I know what you want badly, but I've only one bar of soap in the house, and the servant is using it. Come again some other time."

Very Important.

LAURA: "Auntie, should I be justified in writing to a young man who had never written to me?" Auntie: "Only on very important business, my dear." Laura: "Well, this is important business. I want to marry him."

Appropriate.

"WOULDN'T you like some mottoes for your house, mum? It's very cheering to a husband to see a nice motto on the wall when he comes home." Mrs. Browne: "You might sell me one if you've got one that says, 'Better late than never.'"

Overheard at Margate.

EXCITED LADY (on the beach): "Why isn't something done for that ship in distress, sir?" Coastguard: "We have sent the crew a line to come ashore, mum." "Good gracious! Were they waiting for a formal invitation?"

Suburban Troubles.

"WHAT'S the trouble between you and Widgely? You were friends while you lived in town?" "Yes, but you see we bought adjoining properties in the suburbs." "What of that?" "Why, he's cracked on poultry, and I'm growing a garden."

Taking Care of it.

SMALL BOY: "Papa, will you lend me your knife?" Papa: "Lend you my knife? It isn't a week since I bought you a new one. What have you done with it? Lost it?" "Oh, no, I've got it yet." "Then why don't you use it?" "You said I must take care of it, and I want to take up some tacks."

Why He Liked School.

VISITOR: "Do you like going to school, my little dear?" Little Fauntleroy: "Yes, indeed." "You love your school, don't you, my pet? And you love your teacher, too, don't you?" "Oh, yes; I wouldn't want any other teacher." "Of course not." "No, indeed. She's awful near-sighted."

Had Seen Too Much.

MISTRESS (to butler): "Well, John, I hear you have come into quite a little legacy. I suppose you will be thinking of getting a wife now?" John: "Lor' bless you, mum, not if I knows it. I've seen too much of married life, begging your pardin', mum."

Business.

MARY: "George, I have heard you spoken of frequently as a successful business man." George: "I am that. Why?" Mary: "Well, considering the fact that you have been visiting me for three years, I think you should maintain your reputation and talk business." He maintained his reputation.

Sorry She Spoke.

HUSBAND (kindly): "My dear, you have nothing decent to wear, have you?" Wife (with alacrity): "No, indeed, I haven't; not a thing. I'd be ashamed to be seen anywhere. My very newest party dress has been worn three times already." Husband: "Yes; that's just what I told Blifkins when he offered me two tickets for the opera to-night. I knew if I took them they'd only be wasted. So I just took one. Well, I must hurry."

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Beware the Landlord.

"ISN'T there such a crime as conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace?" asked a nervous-looking man of a magistrate yesterday morning.

"Of course there is," responded the magistrate.

"Then give me a warrant for my landlord," demanded the nervous man.

"What has he done?" asked the magistrate, eyeing the suitor suspiciously.

"He comes to my house when I've got company, and says he wants the four months' rent I owe him, and sits out on the front steps and howls for his money. If I kick the spine out of him I'd be arrested, wouldn't I?"

"Yes, you would. Why don't you pay him?"

"That isn't the question. He comes to my house at four o'clock in the morning and yells through the key-hole, and then he goes up through the vacant house next door and gets on my roof and shouts down the chimney. He says he will have that money. If I blow him up with gunpowder, it would go hard with me, wouldn't it?"

"Certainly. Can't you come to some understanding with him?"

"It seems not. Has he right to climb over my paling and have fits in my back yard just because I owe him a little money?"

"Does he do that?"

"Of course he does; and when we haul him into the house, he yells murder and draws a crowd. Have I got the right to maul the life out of him with a club for that?"

"I think not," responded the magistrate. "Why don't you move?"

"That's got nothing to do with it. I want to know if he is entitled to slip up on the ice and fall through my basement window, and do two pounds' worth of damage to the glass. Couldn't I knock the stuffing out of him for such an action as that?"

"Certainly not."

"But when he lays down on the pavement and howls that his mother is dead and he can't bury her because I won't pay what I owe him; do you mean to say I haven't got any remedy?"

"I don't know of any. I think you'd better pay him his rent."

"But isn't it conduct calculated to provoke a breach of the peace when he comes round with a quart of laudanum and a pistol and threatens to take 'em both on the premises if I don't pay up? Isn't it a crime when he hangs himself to a tree in front of my house with a paper pinned on him that I drove him to suicide? Won't the law touch him for coming to my door at daylight as drunk as a lord and claiming he's me?"

"I don't think you can do anything but pay him or move. The man has a right to his money, and if you won't pay, well, you must take the consequences."

"That's all I want to know," replied the nervous man, appearing relieved. "I'm the landlord, and my tenant says he'll have me arrested for doing these things. Now he'll have to pay up or I'll fall off the top of the house and have an inquest in his parlour. A man can't live four months in my house for nothing without going to some trouble." And the nervous man pranced off glowing all over with grim determination.

[John Smythe.

Domestic Reciprocity.

"Dear, please tell me how to spell costume. I'm writing to mother about my lovely new gown." "Well, are you ready?" "Yes." "C-o-s-t, cost." "Yes." "T-o to." "Well?" "M-e, me, sixty-five shillings as yet unpaid." "You're a wretch."

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A PIECE OF WEDDING CAKE.

The Old, Old Story Told in a New Way.

Jack Kempster sat on an overturned barrel. He was diving down into a box before him and taking out slowly, one by one, the different articles that had been sent him.

Each present was neatly packed, and many had names attached.

"Such a collection of things," murmured Jack, as he deposited them all in a heap, with a view of going over them again.

It was a warm, pleasant day. Christmas always had been associated in Jack's mind with snow and cold, but here it was balmy as summer.

"West Africa is all very well," Jack had said that morning to one of his friends, who also had enlisted as a private, "but give me snow, and ice, and freezing generally that we have at home. It seems as if that were a part of Christmas."

In truth, Jack felt rather homesick, and he thought gladly of the time when he could turn his back on all this and go back to his work again in the office.

This was at 9 a.m. Before 10 each man in the regiment had his Christmas box and had gone off by himself quietly to investigate the contents.

Jack slowly went over the packages. There was a dainty handkerchief with his initial embroidered in the corner.

"Not much use out here," thought Jack ruefully. There was a lot of tobacco from a young man friend at home, a number of books, a few photographs, and, tucked in one corner, was a tiny package marked "For the owner of the box.'"

Jack took the latter up and eyed it curiously. He felt sure he had never seen the writing before. It was pretty and delicate. A woman's, evidently. It made Jack feel eager to see the contents, and he hastily tore off the wrapping paper.

Inside was a tiny box covered with white silk wrought in rosebuds, and round it, written upon a dainty sheet of paper, was a letter.

Jack Kempster read the letter with evident amusement. Then he opened the little box.

"By Jove!" he ejaculated as he did so. "That girl is clever. She did send some after all."

Ten minutes later he was with his friend, Tom Carpenter.

"Tom," he cried, as he flourished his letter in the air, "have you a letter like this?"

"I don't know what you mean by 'like this,'" averred Tom, who was in a more sedate frame of mind, "but I've got a piece of wedding cake from some girl at home and a letter."

"So have I," cried Jack, "and here is my letter. Did you have one like it? Just listen and see."

With these words he began to read excitedly:

"'I know we have been forbidden to put any eatables in the Christmas boxes sent out to the boys in the regiments, but I am determined to smuggle my package in. I have taken six pieces of wedding cake and put in six different boxes. These boxes will be covered with a piece of the dress I wore at the last wedding where I was bridesmaid. I have been bridesmaid at six weddings. They all say I make such a nice one, but no one seems to think I want a wedding of my own. Perhaps one of you six young men will hunt me up after you get home, but at any rate put the cake under your pillow and dream of—The Maiden All Forlorn.'"

"Doesn't that beat everything?" cried enthusiastic Jack, when he had finished. "And we haven't an idea who did it. I am going to save my box, for it matches her dress, and if I hunt the world over I'll find that girl."

"Humph," ejaculated Tom. "She can stay 'the maiden all forlorn' for all I care. A girl must be pretty hard up to do this, even if she is in demand as a bridesmaid."

But Jack noticed that the little box was carefully put away in Tom's knapsack, and that crumbs of wedding cake decorated his friend's cot the next morning.

* * * * * *

It was evening at a South of England summer resort. The verandahs were full of guests, and men in flannels and maidens in airy costumes were walking to and fro on the broad walk that led to the ball-room. The regiments were home from West Africa. The summer hotels were crowded, and conversation did not lag for want of a topic.

Jack, Tom, and several of their chums had come down together for a short holiday.

From Mrs. Van Tweezer's cottage close by, the sound of music floated upon the air. Inside there were a few guests assembled to listen to the singer of the evening, a young girl who had studied extensively in the Continental centres.

"We will bored to death, there is no doubt," Jack Kempster remarked as he struggled into his dress suit and reflected that it was over a year since he had worn the habiliments of civilisation.

Later he stood in Mrs. Van Tweezer's reception-room. By his side was Tom Carpenter, somewhat lame yet from the ugly wound he had received at the front, but still genial and pleasant.

"Do you know the name of the singer?" Jack queried, as he ran his eye over the room. He received no answer, for at that moment Tom, who was beside him, gave a violent start.

"I think," said Tom, "my leg is so bad, I will go over and sit in the back of the room. You do as you please, Jack." And before Jack Kempster knew it, his friend was gone.

Then there was a little bustle and a hush. A young woman stood up in front and prepared to sing.

What she sang Jack never knew. He saw a vision of brown hair, with eyes that matched; a small, delicate, oval face, and—ye gods! could it be true? This girl had on a dress made of the very silk that decorated the box wherein his bit of wedding cake was sent.

Jack felt sure of this. He surreptitiously put his hand into his pocket and pulled out the cover of the box. Ever since Christmas he had carried it with him, and now he was to meet her at last.

The young man quivered with excitement. As soon as the applause subsided Mrs. Van Tweezer found Mr. Kempster before her.

"Such a delightful evening," he murmured. Then, as if conventionalities were over: "May I ask for an introduction to the singer? She has a sympathetic voice."

"I am glad you like it," replied Mrs. Van Tweezer patronisingly. "Best of all, she is a charming young girl. I should be pleased to present you to Miss Templeton, but I saw her just this moment pass through the door with Mr. Thomas Carpenter."

Jack said nothing, but he reflected that for once Tom had the better of him, and that when the wedding cake came it was Tom who had said: "A girl must be pretty hard up to do this."

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Out on the verandah Miss Templeton sat in a deck chair with her hands clasped before her. By her side, perched on the railing and opening and shutting her fan as he spoke, Tom Carpenter was holding forth on the subject of the campaign.

"And to think we should meet here," murmured Miss Templeton softly.

As she said this Tom looked at her dress.

"Do you know," he said at length, "a curious thing happened? We boys had each of us a Christmas box from home. It was awfully jolly and nice, and we were delighted with the contents and the thought that there were people at home who really cared for us. Well, six of us fellows received each a tiny box filled with wedding cake, and there was a letter with it."

Tom paused purposely. The girl at his side sat motionless.

"Do you want to know what was in the letter?" he asked at last.

"Yes," she said quietly, her brown eyes fixed apparently on the Japanese lanterns that swayed to and fro in the breeze.

Tom went on: "It was from a girl, and she said she was tired of being a bridesmaid, and——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Miss Templeton, rising suddenly. "I really must go into the house. It is my time to sing again."

"Not until you have heard me, Elizabeth," and the name came naturally to Tom's lips. "Confess that you wrote it. Did you think one of them would fall into my hands?"

Elizabeth attempted to flee, but Tom detained her.

"I know your writing. Have I not treasured up enough to know it in Africa? I am a lame soldier, just returned from war. I haven't much to live on, but I love you, Elizabeth, and have for years. Will you let me tell you so now?"

As he said this Tom took Elizabeth's hands in his and looked gravely into her face.

"Come," he said, opening his arms. "Confess you sent the letter."

"Oh, Tom," she cried, as she hid her blushing face on his shoulder. "I—I was so miserable. There you had gone off without saying a word and—and when I heard you were wounded I—I thought I would die. I—I didn't dare send one letter and cake just to you alone, so I sent six pieces and knew that you would get one."

"Elizabeth, you're a trump," said Tom softly, as he stroked her head. "I always thought so, and now I know it, and I am the happiest man in all the world."

* * * * *

The next morning Jack Kempster said nothing as he listened to the confidences of his friend, Tom Carpenter.

"Why don't you ask who the lady is?" asked Tom, in a tone of disappointment. "When a man is going to marry, his friends usually are interested enough to ask the girl's name."

"Because I know already," was the laconic reply of Kempster, as he walked over to the grate.

There was a fire in it to take off the chill in the room, but Jack shivered a little as he threw in the lid of a box covered with white silk wrought in rosebuds.

J. L. C.

Present, Past, and Future.

Three girls were exchanging confidences and telling each other what sort of men they liked best. First Girl: "I like a man with a past. A man with a past is always interesting." Second Girl: "That's true; but I don't think he's nearly so interesting as the man with a future." Third Girl: "The man who interests me, is the man with a present."

What They Couldn't Do.

Miss Elder: "Well, I maintain that women can do anything men can." Mr. Gazzum: "Oh, no. The auctioneer's business is one women cannot go into." "Nonsense! She'd make every bit as good an auctioneer as a man." "Just imagine an unmarried woman getting up before a crowd and exclaiming, 'Now gentlemen, all I want is an offer!'"

Living on a Shilling a Week.

Now and again we hear of people existing for longer or shorter periods on minute quantities of food. A case which occurred recently in Lancashire is worthy of attention. Miss Bertha Mosedale, of Georgina Street, Bury, remembers a time when for six long weeks she did not eat a shilling's worth of food a week. Bile Beans for Biliousness have now so toned up her whole system that this sad state of affairs is merely a recollection. To a *Bury Boro' Advertiser* reporter she said: "For a long time I suffered from weakness, and I was fagged with the least effort. Do what I would I could not rid myself of a done-up, worked-out sensation. I had no desire for food, no energy for anything, no ambition, and little hope of a cure. Eventually I had to leave my work and take to my bed. For six weeks I remained there, and during the whole of that time I don't think I ate a shilling's worth of food in a week. Bile Beans for Biliousness were recommended to me, and by giving them a fair trial I soon reaped a marvellous amount of good. They have now cured me entirely, and I have resumed my work. I feel better in all ways than I ever remember to have done in my life before." Debility and anæmia were solely responsible for Miss Mosedale's condition. For these ailments, for indigestion, sleeplessness, "that done-up feeling," loss of appetite, nervousness, headache, constipation, piles, dizziness, loss of ambition, pains in the chest and back, all female ailments, skin eruptions, pimples, and all blood impurities, Bile Beans for Biliousness are an unfailing cure. Obtainable from all chemists, or from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, E.C., upon receipt of price, one and three-half-pence or two and nine.

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Ted, the Matchmaker.

A Pretty Tale of Platonic Friendship.

For more than seven years now John Whewell had, every evening on the stroke of eight, passed, in his usual whirlwind fashion, up the main stairway of Riverside Mansions, Chelsea.

The regularity of John's evening visits to Mr. St. John's flat had made them to be eagerly looked for by Audrey, Mr. St. John's only child.

Papa St. John was a widower, and it must be confessed a not very agreeable old gentleman. The prevailing idea with him was that the largest moiety of his income should of right be spent upon himself. This being so, poor Audrey had a somewhat hard time of it; the house-money being doled out to her in such meagre and inadequate sums that she was often hard put to it to square the domestic circle.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that Audrey had come to regard John Whewell's nightly visit as being paid, in the main, to herself, and to cherish thoughts not perhaps quite warranted by the actual facts of the case.

Sometimes she would say to herself that she was too old to marry. "Why, I saw another half-a-dozen silver hairs this morning. And yet thirty-five isn't really old. Besides, John is forty, and—well, it's disgraceful for me to be thinking such things! But then, papa would be so much better alone! and I? Audrey St. John, I'm ashamed of you!"

Not that there was anything really to be ashamed of, for it was only to her own heart that she whispered the hope that, some day, John Whewell would ask her to be his wife.

But John, as yet, had never spoken. Truth to say, he had never actually said anything that could reasonably be construed into other than mere courtesy and friendly good-nature.

On the occasions of John Whewell's visits he usually remained an hour; smoked a pipe with papa St. John, chatted with Audrey; always leaving the latter happier than he found her.

But on this particular evening the head of the house was out—a club dinner, or something of that sort—and Audrey, lonely, disappointed, and full of depressive imaginings, felt more than ever the need of John's cheery presence.

Then the shadows deepened—it was midsummer—and the silence became painful, almost beyond bearing.

She could not ask even her old schoolmate and present close friend, Kitty Prendergast, for reasons; for very shame she could not put on her hat to go and do it.

"People's tongues wag quite fast enough," she said to herself.

No doubt she exaggerated both the circumstance and her own fears, but how she longed to know the "why" and the "wherefore." And this, not of curiosity merely, for she had sense enough to be aware that the knowledge might really prove the deathblow to her heart's desire.

By a strange chance the very one who could let daylight into the mystery, looked in about nine o'clock.

"What, Audrey! no lights! Why, what's the matter with you? Where's Mr. St. John? And—and—— Oh, no—of course not—he *couldn't* be here!"

Audrey said nothing except that she was pleased to see her friend.

"Audrey," went on Kitty Prendergast, the veriest rattle-trap, and yet of all women the biggest hearted, "I do declare you just look ghastly!" switching on the electric light over the mantelpiece as she spoke. "What is it all about?"

"Oh, nothing, Kitty! nothing! There is nothing whatever the matter with me. I am having a quiet think, that's all."

"Nonsense, my dear!" returned her friend meaningly. "I know better! Shall I tell you something — something that you would give your ears to hear?"

"I don't know that there is anything I want to hear—particularly," said Audrey.

"No? Well, my dear, that might do for some people, but it will not do for me! You are a mendacious little hypocrite, Audrey St. John! Don't want to hear, indeed! What is it, do you suppose now, that has kept a certain gentleman of our acquaintance from being seen at Riverside Mansions this evening, eh?"

"Kitty! What *do* you mean? Gentleman, indeed! It may be all very clever—as a joke—but I fail to see the point of it; perhaps because it is such a poor one!"

"Well! of all the—! What would you say now, if I told you that John Whewell's young brother, Ted, is back unexpectedly from Canada, and that my silly old cousin John, glad to have his prodigal under his wing again, is to-day killing the 'fatted calf,' and all that sort of thing, you know?"

"Is that all?" said Audrey quietly, though a close observer might have detected a suppressed eagerness in her eyes, as indicating not only an evident desire for further and more detailed information, but the evident relief that her fears were, at any rate, not far from being groundless.

"Yes," Kitty went on, artfully conscious that her listener was absorbing her tale, "Ted having arrived, it naturally follows, doesn't it, that John's usual evening engagements should be temporarily suspended, and that his little attentions to single ladies (you needn't blush, my dear! I mention no names) should be, as naturally, postponed for a day or two."

But Audrey was not to be decoyed into any demonstration of personal feeling.

The friendship between herself and Kitty Prendergast was a matter of wonder to all their friends, so different were they in every way. Perhaps it was that Kitty's irrepressible and irresistible good-humour and genuine kind-heartedness attracted the more reserved and self-contained nature of Audrey, on the principle of two negatives making a positive. It is true that Kitty's boisterous and often unrefined ways, jarred upon Audrey at times, when, not infrequently, her own thoughts were occupied with gentle if impossible dreamings; but, somehow or another, the one understood and appreciated the other, each being affectionately blind to her friend's faults and personal idiosyncracies.

Papa St. John being who and what he was, Kitty was able to do Audrey many a good turn. Being rich and a widow (since her twenty-third year), Mr. St. John's household arrangements were, more than once, indebted to her timely help, a state of things which did not trouble the old gentleman in the least, inasmuch as he was accustomed to take life as he found it and ask no questions.

It was in this spirit that Kitty, on this particular evening, cast about her to see how the domestic land lay.

"Look here, Audrey," she said, after thinking a moment, "come to Cheyne Court with me and have some supper. I've a bird, my dear! I know you enjoy birds. Your father? Oh, never mind him. He'll have had quite as much as is good for him at his club! Come along! You've got the dumps, and it's my business to cure you! There! Your foolishness, Audrey, is wonderful! and I will not have any more of it!"

"In half an hour, then, Kitty," said Audrey, and Kitty, obliged to be satisfied, went away as she had come, in a breeze and a rustle, slamming the outer door behind her till it echoed again.

But that supper never came off.

(*Concluded on page* 703.)

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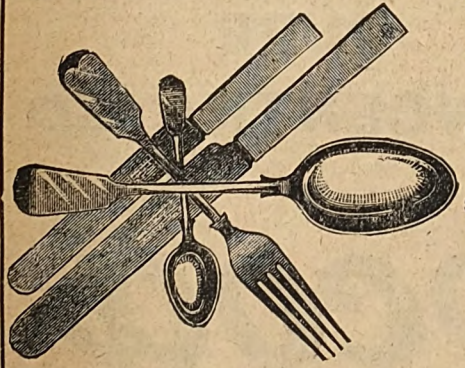

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Which thing was on this wise.

Audrey says to-day that, Kitty gone, she was conscious of some near-at-hand change, some new revolution in her life, the very uncertainty of which made her tremble with apprehension and a vague fear of the unknown.

It might have been ten minutes after Mrs. Prendergast's departure that a masterful knocking at the outer door startled Audrey out of herself.

The servant as well as the master was out, so that Audrey was forced to go to the door herself.

She looked bewildered at the tall, well set-up young fellow of about five-and-twenty, who smiled down upon her, as though perfectly sure of recognition and a welcome.

"Don't you know me?" he said, lifting his broad, soft felt hat, and thereby revealing a long-healed, purple scar, stretching almost from temple to temple.

The pale, sober-faced little woman was in no doubt now; the scar recalled memories.

"Ted! it's Ted, isn't it?" she cried, her voice sounding to herself strangely hushed and far away, for was he not John's brother—John's boy!—as the elder man ever called him.

"Yes," said Ted, and reassuringly increasing his smile. "I'm the 'bad penny!' but you'll let me come in, won't you—old Audrey?—I beg your pardon—the old name would come!"

Inside the room, and he noticed the trembling nervousness of the motionless little figure, for he had known Audrey St. John ever since he could remember.

"Surely you are not well?" he said.

"Well—well? Oh, yes! I am quite well—and—and very glad to see you, Ted."

She was coming back to everyday existence now, her eyes lighting up at the mere presence of this stalwart young reminder of something of which he, as yet, knew nothing.

Then, suddenly remembering, she begged him to run round to Cheyne Court and tell Kitty that she must not expect her till the morrow, for reasons which the person of the messenger would make her readily understand.

"Right you are!" he replied. "And I won't be a tick; for I've not only got a letter for you here from John, but lots to tell you, besides, that will make your very hair stand on end!"

This was certainly an unfortunate simile, seeing that that was about the last thing one would look for Audrey's hair to do, neatly banded down as it was in a fashion long since become old.

He tossed the letter into her lap, and went out on his mission.

When he returned and had delivered Kitty's message, he stayed on for an hour or more, chatting of his colonial experiences, the while that Audrey's hand still covered, on her lap, the as yet unread letter.

But Audrey's very anxiety to hide her joy of the possession of her treasure-letter betrayed her in the end.

By-and-by she furtively slipped the precious missive in her pocket.

Ted marvelled much at the strangely persistent way, then, in which she nursed, so to speak, her right hand.

As she bid him "good-night," she all unconsciously withdrew her hand, still holding the letter, and stretched it out to him.

Then it flashed upon her that she had made a mistake. With a burning colour that might have become the cheeks of sweet seventeen, which even made her to look the Audrey of her own girlhood, she hurriedly thrust the unopened "tell-tale" back again.

But it was too late.

Ted, shrewd and keen-witted above the average, saw and understood.

He, however, just said: "Good-night, old Audrey! (There! it's slipped out again!) See you again soon," and then she was alone, free to think, to dream, to *know*, to her heart's content.

* * * * *

On his way home Ted argued it out with himself, and arranged the whole matter to his own complete satisfaction.

"She evidently thinks all the world of John—although that's no news, for I always thought as much—while the dear old chap may be as deeply in love, without knowing it. This being so—for it is so!—it is my plain duty to both of them to wind up the clock and set it going. I wonder what the letter was about? Only an invitation perhaps for herself and papa St. John (miserable old mummy!) for next Sunday. He said he should ask her. Seems to me, though, as if she suspected something else! She couldn't *know*, for she hadn't opened the note. Anyway, I'll break ground when I get back. I've got a nice little plan, and I'll see how it works. I'll tell him to-night that she's not well, and he's sure then to call to-morrow evening to make inquiries, and if he doesn't see then how things really are, he deserves nothing but ill-luck for the remainder of his natural."

Again were the Fates against Audrey. Or were they for her?

Eight o'clock and John's knock sound together on the evening following. Papa is in and so is the servant, but Audrey prefers to open the door herself.

Again does she commit the error (if error it be) of the night before of "showing her hand," only that this time the consequences reach farther and are of deeper significance.

John sees the letter—his letter (it was, after all, but a simple invitation to dine with him and Ted on the Sunday following), and Audrey's secret is hers no longer, for he has divined it.

That he was startled at the self-revelation, cannot be denied—it could not well be otherwise—but—he sees his way; and that was all that Ted had in his mind—at least, so he admits to himself—and it is fair to suppose that he ought to know.

But, if the truth were known, John's part in the matter was not altogether that of the passively persuaded one.

Insensibly, all these years, he had been finding out his need of a woman in his home, and who but Audrey could come up to his ideal.

Half an hour after his full enlightenment he asked her to come out with him for a stroll on the Embankment.

Papa St. John was asleep, dreaming, maybe, of future club banquets.

Down by the Albert Bridge they stood, leaning on the Embankment parapet, watching the peacefulness of the river, and the dimly-defined trees of Battersea Park opposite.

"Audrey," said John, "don't you think I have been a blundering old idiot?"

"John! I don't understand?"

"No! Why, here have I been—for more years than I like to reckon—within sight and sound of Eden, and have never even tried to climb over the hedge!"

It was a mercy for Audrey that it was dark, for she certainly took to blushing again, this time furiously.

Naturally John imagined that her silence implied acquiescence.

"Well, dear," he went on, "you will have to forgive me, and, I think, had best show your forgiveness by coming as soon as possible to take care of me and Ted."

Perhaps it will be as well just to infer the nature of her answer.

Evidently it was satisfactory, for John proposed return, as it was getting late.

One thing, however, ought to be recorded.

As John walked to his own home, after leaving Audrey at her door, he made a remark to himself.

"*Ted* said she was ill; *she* says there is nothing the matter with her. I'll break every bone in the young rascal's body!"

But it is significant that he smiled as he said it, while it is certain that the threatened punishment has, as yet, never come off, nor, indeed, seems ever likely to do so.

Ralph Enderby.

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Wanted to Steer.

Clara: "When George and I are married I'm to have my own way in everything." Dora: "But you won't." Clara: "Indeed I will. That's the bargain. Don't you remember, I told you he proposed in a boat, and asked if I'd float through life with him just that way?" Dora: "Yes." Clara: "Well, he was rowing, but I was steering."

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By Madge Morris.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* Short Stories.]

I Act as Mediator.

Readers will not be surprised, seeing how many letters I receive weekly from clients, to hear of the strange coincidence I am about to tell them of. The other day a letter reached me from "Wilfred" (Ealing). He had been meeting a young lady for six months past, and they had grown very fond of each other. Then he had to go out of town, and business prevented his corresponding with her as regularly as he had done. It was not that he had grown any less fond of her, but simply that he was engaged on some important work which demanded all his time. On getting through the business he wrote to her again, but weeks elapsed, and he got no answer. The other day he was astonished, on meeting her in the street, to see her pass him by unnoticed. He writes to ask me to explain the cause of this strange conduct. Well, curiously enough, I think I am in a position to give him the correct explanation, and the authentic one, too, coming, as I believe it does, from the young lady herself, who writes to me giving her statement of the case.

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This is "Nellie," who also writes from Ealing, and tells me that for six months she has been seeing a young man. She grew extremely fond of him, but though he was very attentive and kind to her she had the idea that he was not equally fond of her. Her friends told her that he did not really care for her, and that she had better release him from any engagement. At first she was loth to believe this, but recently, under the pretext of having business to attend to, he excused himself from seeing her for some time, when he wrote a rather cool letter. By this time she had convinced herself that the worst was true, and thought it best for both of them if she did not answer the letter, and when next she met him in the street she avoided him. Her reason for this was not that she was any less fond of him, but that she thought it better for them to part. She now wants to know if I think she is justified in what she did.

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Now, it is very clear indeed that my correspondents have misunderstood each other. As both will see on reading the other's statement of the case, neither has in the least fallen off in their affections. The reason for "Wilfred's" seeming coolness was really pressure of business, and nothing else, and the reason for "Nellie's" aloofness was based on a misunderstanding of "Wilfred's" conduct. Let them read each other's case, and make it up. Evidently both are very fond of each other, and it is with very great pleasure that I am able to act as the unconscious peacemaker between them.

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Must One be in Love?

There are a good many false ideas about on the subject of love, and one is that it is against nature for a man not to find himself under the spell of some young lady. "Adolph" is twenty-two, and for five years has constantly met girls, and accompanied them for walks and to the theatre. But all this time he has remained quite cold to their charms, though few of his friends have escaped similarly unscathed. He asks me if the reason is that there is something wrong with him that he does not fall in love.

This is quite a mistake. There is no obligation upon "Adolph" to fall in love with a girl. If he is philosophic enough to be able to keep his head in spite of the fair ones, it simply means that that part of his anatomy is in the ascendency over his heart.

If "Adolf" finds life quite agreeable without love, he should be satisfied. He is quite young, and there can be no possible harm in his remaining un attached for four years or so, when, doubtless, his position in the world will have improved.

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Besides, perhaps "Adolph" is one of those young men who are attracted by women older than himself, and not by girls. Before persuading himself that he is loveless, let him devote his attentions to the maturer ladies, and see how he fares. If this also fails, what is to prevent his remaining a bachelor? These are very useful members of the community, and a certain percentage of men must remain unattached, just as speaking examples of man's lost condition without woman's aid and influence.

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Love versus Mammon.

An interesting problem reaches me from "R. G." (Greenock). A young man of twenty-seven has been earning £90 a year as correspondence clerk. He was engaged to be married in a fortnight to a young lady who was formerly a typewriter in the same employ, but had resigned her position on account of her coming marriage. All arrangements had been made for the ceremony, and invitations issued, house rented and furnished, and trousseau complete. At this stage an advertisement appears in the papers for a private secretary to a gentleman, unmarried, at a handsome salary, and a probable permanency. In an idle moment the young man answers the advertisement.

❦❦❦

He sees the advertiser, and is offered the situation at a salary of £250, on condition that he remains single for three years. How should the young man act? He sees in this offer the chance of a lifetime, which he thinks may effectually advance his prospects in life. Should he postpone the marriage or settle down to his life as a clerk? Now, let me say a word or two about this post of private secretary. I have friends and relations who have held such positions, and can only say that they are almost impossible for young men such as the one in question. To hold such a position means that a man must absolutely devote himself to his employer, must be ready to be at his disposal at any time, even to the detriment of private engagements.

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Such a post is essentially one for a single young man, ready to postpone the "settling down" process indefinitely and to devote his whole time to his employer, and I could not counsel one engaged to a girl, and about to marry, to accept such employment. They could not devote the necessary time to each other, and married life would be transformed into anything but bliss.

Further, it would be a great injustice on the man's part to postpone his marriage under the circumstances. The remuneration would, of course, be much greater, but is he sure that in five years time his position will be as good as it would probably be if he remains in a commercial office? I think not. For a man without family or matrimonial ties, or one anxious to start in a profession, these secretaryships are excellent, but for those with responsibilities they have little to recommend them.

I advise my correspondent to stick to his employment, and try and make a position for himself in his own sphere of life, and not to think of such ventures as this, even though at first they seem to be very promising. When he is actually engaged, and about to marry the girl of his choice, to throw her up to catch at an imaginary chance of prosperity would be a very ungenerous thing to do.

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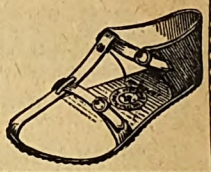

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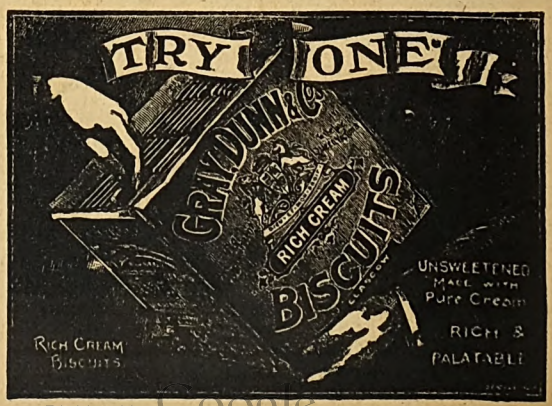

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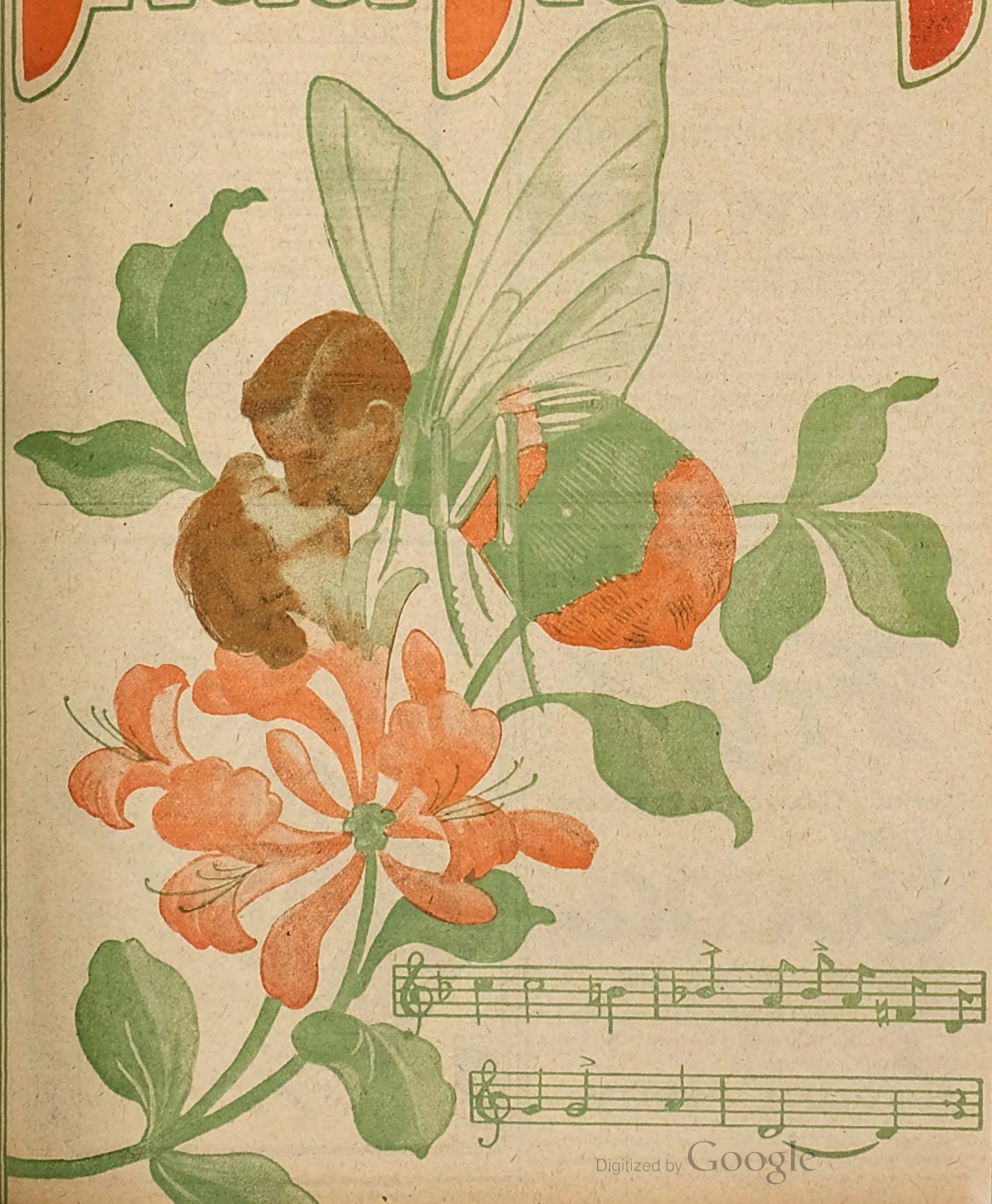

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G. W. Hillingham

Telling of a Man, a Girl, and a Picture.

A MAN whistled it idly as he sat under the cliffs. He was a young man, with a careless, cynical face, and he didn't know in the least what he whistled, or that he whistled at all.

"You are the honeysuckle, I am the bee."

He sat back on his stool looking at a picture on the easel before him with an air of pleased satisfaction. He had succeeded! He drew a deep breath and touched his purple rocks and green sea with a loving, delicate brush. Here was the picture that would bring him fame at last—fame, and the woman he loved!

The sea on his canvas had all the look and strength and beauty of the sea before him. It was real! He felt an odd thrill as he looked at it, and realised that there was power in his brush that would make the men and women who looked at that picture feel, and breathe the sea he had painted, and he wondered if it would make Amy Reeves feel too.

He sighed a little and turned almost impatiently fr m the thought. At least she would feel that the picture would make him famous, and that was all she wanted. She had said she would marry him when he succeeded, and he *had* succeeded now. This picture would make him famous and in a few months time he would have everything he wanted, and the woman for whom he had worked would be his wife.

He leant back on his stool, his shoulders touching the grey cliffs behind him and his eyes looking out across the sea. They were fickle eyes, as many a woman knew, but Amy Reeves, the American heiress, was too clever a beauty to allow them to be fickle to her, and though she fully intended to let him marry her some day, she meant to make him work for her first.

He was thinking of her now as he looked out across the tossing white foam, but somehow between him and the sea, between him and Amy Reeves' brilliant dark eyes, was another face. It was such a delicate face that it seemed almost like a bit of foam itself and as if it might as easily melt away, and he wondered uncomfortably if he had been quite fair to the owner of that face.

A voice humming the same foolish, haunting air that he had whistled a moment ago, made him turn abruptly, to find a man coming down the cliff close behind him. He was a young man and an artist like himself. He reached the shingle and dropped lazily back against the cliff.

"What a slave you are, Ferrars," he said. "You never used to be so industrious. What is the matter with you? By Jove, though, that's good, old man! That'll be the picture of the year, or my name's not Jones!"

Gerald Ferrars got up from his stool with his face alight.

"I mean it to be," he said eagerly. "You know how I've worked for this, Dickie. It's given me a lot of trouble to get that light on the sea. I've haunted the shore every day at this hour, and I do believe it's perfect now, Dickie."

Dickie Jones looked a little grave. He knew very well that during the three months he had lived at Wilbeach, Gerald had spent so many hours of the day in hard work, but he also knew that the rest of the time had been occupied in dangerous play—dangerous for one person at least. He looked at the picture, magnificent in its power and strength and beauty, on the easel.

"And you're going back to London to-morrow?" he asked.

"Yes, of course," Gerald said. "Now that this is finished there's no reason for staying."

Dickie Jones looked out at sea again.

"What will Miss Daisy Clifford say?" he asked.

Gerald frowned and pushed a little bundle of brushes into his box with a clatter.

"Confound it! I don't know," he said.

"You'd no business to do it," Dickie went on quickly. "It was beastly unfair. You came down to do work that would make another woman your wife and then set to work deliberately to make love to Daisy. She is only a little girl and probably never met a man like you before, and I've meant to tell you several times—it was a beastly caddish thing to do."

Gerald's face flushed angrily for a moment and his lips set as if he would have replied sharply, but he shrugged his shoulders instead.

"Mind your own business," he said. "Daisy's all right. She knows it was only fun."

But did she? Dickie got up and crunched a yard or two across the shingle, and came back.

"Are you sure she does?" he asked. "Because you know you are rather fond of playing at love and letting them think it's real. Miss Reeves was the only one who made you be serious and you can't even stick to her. Are you sure Daisy Clifford understands?"

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His ugly grey eyes looked straight at Gerald's handsome ones, and Gerald looked away uneasily.

"Confound your impertinence!" he cried. "Go and look after Daisy yourself. You know very well that I always hoped to marry Miss Reeves!"

"Yes, I know," said Dickie, "but I've thought just lately that you've been playing at love even more realistically than usual. I almost thought you were in earnest. I suppose you're certain you're not?"

He looked keenly at Gerald's face, and then turned, humming the old foolish air—"You are the honeysuckle, I am the bee."

"I wish to goodness you wouldn't sing that stupid rubbish," Gerald cried. "It's the silliest nonsense I ever heard."

"Is it though?" said Dickie. "It's true of you, anyhow. You're the bee yourself. You run about from place to place making love to every girl you meet, and then you go off without thinking any more about it. Now there's Daisy. You'll leave her like the rest, and if you come back here in a month or two you'll see what you've done. She's just a little bit of honeysuckle, and you've stolen all the happiness from her."

He turned abruptly and strolled away, leaving Gerald staring after him almost stupidly. His face was hard and set when he stooped to put up his paints at last, and he looked at the picture that was to bring him fame and fortune and the woman he loved, with angry eyes. It seemed to him that all the beauty of it had gone. He could not see it for a pair of blue eyes and a little pale face that Dickie had said was like honeysuckle.

It was absurd! She would forget everything in a month, and some day soon, he would hear of her being married to the curate. She would forget him, of course, and the long afternoons on the shore, and the walks, and the hours they had spent on the cliffs together. She would never remember him again, except as a pleasant episode in her life.

Yet he did not like to think that. He did not want her quite to forget him, and, somehow, as he thought about it, he did not want her to forget him at all.

That was stupid, of course, for he was going to marry Amy Reeves, and yet somehow, too, just then, Daisy's pale face was nearer his heart than Amy's brilliant one.

He picked up his paint box and then an odd sound made him start. It came from somewhere quite close—a sound like a sob.

He stood and listened, and this time he heard it distinctly—someone sobbing close behind him.

He looked up at the cliff and the zigzag path that wound down between coarse grass and stunted bushes. It was someone hidden there, perhaps.

He stood with a strange feeling at heart. It was a girl, of course. What was she sobbing for he wondered?

Somehow Daisy's white face seemed to rise before him again, and he took a step forward across the shingle.

At the sound of it, the sobbing ceased abruptly. Gerald stared hard at a big bush close at hand, and fancied he could just discern behind the dark leaves a glimpse of a girl's white dress.

He went forward slowly until he could see right behind it and then his heart jumped painfully, for it was Daisy herself who crouched there—Daisy, with her face hidden and her shoulders shaking—Daisy who had heard every word Dickie Jones had said about Amy Reeves!

Gerald stood still for a moment, and then went closer to the little figure behind the bush.

"Daisy!" he cried.

He saw her give a start and then lift a bewildered, agitated face.

"Daisy," he said again. "Why are you crying like that?"

She rose slowly to her feet with her lips still quivering and her eyes still wet.

"It was nothing," she said. "I—I didn't know you were there. I thought you'd gone along the shore."

She hesitated. He looked sharply at her white, drawn face and wondered for a short instant how it was Miss Reeves' seemed so vulgar beside it. Then he went forward and catching her arm, pulled her down on to the shore. There he put his hand on her shoulder and looked into her eyes.

"You heard what Dickie Jones said?" he remarked.

Daisy could never tell a lie and she could not now. She looked uneasily out at the great sea and her lips quivered again.

"I—I—couldn't help it," she stammered. "I came down the cliff close behind him, and when I heard what he said I—I couldn't come any farther."

She looked so small and helpless that Gerald felt a thorough brute. His hand on her shoulder relaxed a little.

"Well, it was true," he said roughly. "Every bit of it was true. I've been a cur. I've been working for another woman, and this picture—" He dragged her suddenly towards it and made her stand facing it—the picture she loved because it was his, the picture which she had watched day by day as it grew under his brush, the picture she had been so proud of!

She shivered a little as if a cold wind had suddenly blown up from the sea.

"You see it," he cried. "It's perfect now. It will bring me fame—oh, I know it will, and you've helped me to paint it, you've been at my side and helped me to catch the colours—oh, your thoughts are in it as well as mine, and yet I painted it for another woman!"

She gave a little sob but said nothing.

"Why don't you call me a brute?" he demanded passionately. "You know I'm a cur. You know I pretended—God knows what things to you. Why don't you round on me?"

She looked up at him for an instant.

"I can't," she said brokenly.

Gerald's hand trembled. He looked at his picture. He tried to conjure up the hungry ambition that had possessed him three months ago and to crush down the stupid weakness that threatened to master him now, and he took his hand from Daisy's shoulder and clenched it. Why did she not upbraid him? Why did she not reproach him, hurl ugly names at him as he deserved? It would be easier for him then, for he was going back to Miss Reeves, of course!

Yet was he? He looked at Daisy suddenly. She was standing quite still, trying to steady her face and to make him believe that she did not really care. He could see the determination in her eyes to make him think that she had been playing at love too, and the sight stabbed him.

He stooped suddenly and picked up a brush from his box.

"Daisy!" he cried hoarsely.

He rose to his feet again and held out a hand to her. It was trembling violently and his face was set and grey as he made his supreme sacrifice.

He plunged forward and dashed across the blue and green and purple of his picture, a hideous splash of red!

Daisy gave a cry. He turned to her and dropped the brush.

"Daisy, forgive me," he cried. "I've been a brute, I've been a cur, but I've put an end to it now, and if you'll forgive me I'll paint a better picture than that. I'll work hard for you—for you!"

She looked into his eyes and held her breath.

"But—the other girl?" she said brokenly.

He pointed to the picture.

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"She will not marry me now," he cried, "I've destroyed my picture and put an end to that, and Daisy, I did not love her after all. It was you."

She looked up at him questioningly. He saw the doubt in her eyes give way to faith, and he stooped and kissed her hands.

* * * * *

Twenty minutes later Dickie Jones, rounding a boulder, fancied he saw Daisy in Gerald's arms, and it seemed to him that both were embarrassed and commenced with unnecessary haste to put up the paints.

His brow darkened.

"He's a bigger cur even than I thought," he muttered. Then he stopped short. Was he *really* staring at Gerald's masterpiece with a great splash of red across it, or was it a trick?

He wheeled round.

"Good gracious, what on earth does this mean?" he cried.

Gerald's arm went brazenly and boldly round Daisy's waist, and his lips met hers.

"It means that the bee has healed the wound he made in the honeysuckle, and that he's now sipping the honey from the ruby lips, and so forth," Dickie said.

Then he turned and strolled away, humming the refrain.

A. L. Brazier.

The Sound of a Voice.

A Pathetic Narrative of a Recovered Memory.

Along the white dusty road a man was trudging; his greasy, shuffling figure making the only blot on an otherwise perfect landscape.

He was a tall, gaunt fellow, with a shock of tangled hair, and his seamed and furrowed face bore the unmistakable signs of a chequered career. His clothes, which were in a shocking state of dilapidation, hung from his spare frame in a series of fluttering rags, so that he bore an almost ludicrous resemblance to an animated scarecrow.

From time to time he stopped to readjust a piece of dirty rag which bound up an injured ankle, limping on afresh, reviling the heat.

It was the 21st August, a black letter day in the wretched creature's existence, but the fact of its being noon and his having risen without breakfasting, absorbed his whole thoughts, and excluded any remembrance of the fatal day from entering his mind.

Six years ago the prison gates had opened to admit Charles Jefferies, an absconding bank clerk. The case had attracted some little attention at the time, since the prisoner, who was well connected, was on the eve of his marriage.

Taking into consideration that Jefferies was the tool of others, and more sinned against than sinning, the judge had passed a sentence of two years' imprisonment on him.

Immediately on hearing the sentence pronounced, the man had swooned and been carried from the court to the prison hospital, to lie for many weeks in complete oblivion to his surroundings, racked and tortured by an attack of brain fever. After a period of weary suspense, during which time his life hung in the balance, the scales turned in Jefferies' favour, and he lived, a hollow-eyed shadow of his former self, a man without a memory.

The prison doctor looked upon Jefferies' loss as a blessing in disguise. "What would some of the best of us give," he remarked, "let alone these poor chaps, to be able to wipe the slate clean and begin over again. And that is what it amounts to with Jefferies, he has no recollection of the past, and never will have, unless some kind friend enlightens him. Why, bless me, he does not even know his name or age, let alone what he is here for."

At the expiration of the man's sentence, the prison authorities informed the father of the day and hour of his son's release, but by a fatal error the clerk wrote the wrong date, so that when Jefferies senior arrived at the prison he learnt that his son had departed on the previous day.

From that time Charles Jefferies vanished as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, and despite the exhaustive search instituted by his parents no trace of the missing man was ever found.

So Jefferies began life afresh with a two year old memory full of nothing brighter than prison reflections.

It was impossible for the man to prosper. He could only procure work of an unskilled character, and his peculiar reticence, due to his infirmity, made him unpopular with his fellow-workmen. By the end of eighteen months his clothes were shabby, in two years they were ragged. Then came several seasons spent toiling in the fields, each followed by winter in one of the big cities, the remembrance of which haunted him like a nightmare.

By this time the few faded garments which covered him were dilapidated beyond description, and misery and want had so dulled his intellect that he no longer struggled against Fate.

And between the well-groomed, good-looking bank clerk and this human derelict, not even the mother who bore him could have traced any resemblance.

Unable at last to proceed any further, the tramp seated himself at the road side. His sprained ankle was causing him a good deal of pain, it was swollen out of all shape and hurt horribly; the heat, too, was intense, and adding greatly to his discomfort was the ever present fact that eighteen hours had passed since he had last tasted food. If he could only go to sleep it would be cooler when he woke up, he told himself.

Soothed somewhat by this reflection he lay back and closed his eyes, and like D'Artagnan's redoubtable servant, Planchet, proceeded to "dine sleeping," an unsatisfactory method of taking his meals which he had been forced to patronise a good deal of late.

While he lay thus in a state of semi-unconsciousness, a party of pleasure-seekers on their way to the river, and bearing a picnic basket in their midst, passed by. One of their number, a girl in a white drill dress, who carried a scarlet parasol in one

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hand, suddenly caught up her skirts and stepped hurriedly into the middle of the road.

"Oh, Jim," she cried, turning to the man beside her, "did you see that awful creature lying asleep in the hedge? I nearly trod on him." They looked back.

With his head on one arm, his tangled hair partly concealing his face, and his mouth open, the tramp presented, if possible, a more hideous spectacle asleep than awake.

"I don't wonder you were frightened!" the man exclaimed, half angrily, suppressing a shudder, "such human miseries should not be allowed to wander about at large."

"I know you'll think me strange," the girl remarked, as they turned away and walked on to join the others, "but I cannot help wondering if that wretched object has ever had any one to care for him. It hardly seems possible, does it?"

The man shot a rapid glance at his companion's face. It was quite serious. "Whatever put such an idea in your head? Do you know, Grace, I think you are different from any other girl I have ever met. You are all moods and fancies."

"Am I? I suppose it is because I have had something in my life to make me different," she replied gravely. Then, laying her hand on his arm, she continued speaking in a voice she tried hard to keep calm, but which trembled in spite of herself. "Six years ago to-day *he* was put in prison. I know it is not fair to remind you of that other miserable business, but I could not help it; it all seemed to come back to me as I stood looking at that tramp—then I remembered the date—Jim, what *has* become of him? I shall never believe that the man they took out of the Regent's Canal was Charlie, even though his father identified him, for I know nothing would ever have induced him to part with the ring I gave him, and the poor drowned man wore no rings."

Before her companion had time to reply, a young fellow in flannels called out to them to hurry up, "as the luncheon basket was confoundedly heavy, and it was Jim's turn to take a hand with it." As they passed on out of sight the tramp sat up and rubbed his eyes. The voice of one of the passers-by had broken in on his troubled dreams and touched a chord in his memory that had lain dormant for years. Like a faint echo coming up from the past it brought with it a sense of overpowering peace and happiness. For a string of fleeting thoughts were chasing each other through his poor muddled brain in perplexing numbers, scraps of conversation he recollected having heard years ago, oddly familiar scenes and faces, and above all the sound of a woman's voice, which quickened the sluggish blood in his veins, and set his shrunken body trembling. When and where had he heard that voice before?

Still trembling, he scrambled to his feet and stared wildly about him, but the spell was broken, his dream had faded and nothing but the twittering of the birds and the humming of the insects sounded in his ears.

With a deep-drawn sigh the man buried his head in his hands and tried to think. He knew he had stood on the brink of discovering the mystery that had darkened his life. Something, he knew not what, had half awakened his memory, and, will o' the wisp-like, had flitted on where he could not follow.

Absently he began twisting a gold ring round his finger. Without being able to explain why, he had always entertained a foolish regard for this scrap of jewellery. In some way or other he felt convinced that it had played an important part in his history, and he clung to it fiercely, as the one link that bound him to the past. Rocking himself to and fro in his misery he groaned aloud: "Lord, what have I done that I may not remember?"

The day wore on. The sun, once high in the heavens, had begun its downward course, while a faint breeze disturbed the glassy smoothness of the river.

Jefferies meanwhile had dragged himself to the water's edge, and having satisfied his thirst had crawled back into the shade of some bushes to sleep.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a shrill cry for help, followed by answering cries in the distance and the sound of oars striking the water in quick succession.

Scrambling hurriedly to his feet, the man scanned the surface of the river.

To his left a girl in white was pointing frantically with a red parasol to a dark object which was being borne swiftly towards him. At a little distance a couple of oars floated idly on the water.

Standing on the bank, half dazed with sleep, Jefferies nevertheless realised that the same voice that had moved him so strangely a few hours before, was calling to him, urging him to action, and he obeyed the summons blindly. As it happened, in his youth he had been a fine swimmer, but no remembrance of that time came back to him as he plunged into the water and struck out mechanically towards the drowning man.

Exhausted from want of food, with little else than the mere knowledge of the art of swimming left to him, Jefferies had scarcely gone a few yards before he found his strength beginning to fail. Every moment now he was growing weaker. Still he kept on, his eyes fixed on a dark object, now not far distant, pausing at length to clutch frantically at it as it floated by.

There was a sharp, wild struggle, the water closing twice over both men's heads, but Jefferies never left go his hold on the other man, knowing that, once parted, the strong current would have drawn him on to certain death.

Presently the boat swept alongside, and the drowning man and his rescuer were lifted into safety.

* * * * *

They laid him on the bank and eager hands tried to force some brandy between his lips, but without success.

"Poor chap, I'm afraid it's all up with him!" one man remarked.

A girl in a white dress came towards the group. "The doctor says Jim will be all right. He has just come to, but he can't leave him yet. And the other man is to be carried up to the cottage at once," she ended breathlessly.

At the sound of her voice the tramp stirred uneasily; then his eyes opened with the light of recognition.

"Grace!" he cried in a voice trembling with joy, but which sounded to his hearers like a husky whisper, "Grace, don't you know me?"

The girl shrank back from the sodden heap of rags at her feet with a little cry of dismay. "What can he mean?" she asked aghast.

"He mistakes you for some one else," one of the group whispered. "Say something to him, he's a plucky beggar."

The girl bent over the prostrate form, "You have saved the life of the man I am going to marry, so I shall never be able to thank you enough," she said kindly, adding, "and you shall never want again."

He scarcely heeded what she said, for his brain had grown suddenly clear so that the past was no longer a sealed book to him. And with his new-found knowledge came the hideous fear that before long the woman he loved would learn his miserable secret. With a quick movement he had drawn from his finger the ring she had once given him, and gathering together his remaining strength, he flung it far into the river, and as the circles widened over the spot where it sank, a smile of triumph flickered on his face, then his head fell back, and those standing by knew that his soul had fled.

Gwendolyn Nation.

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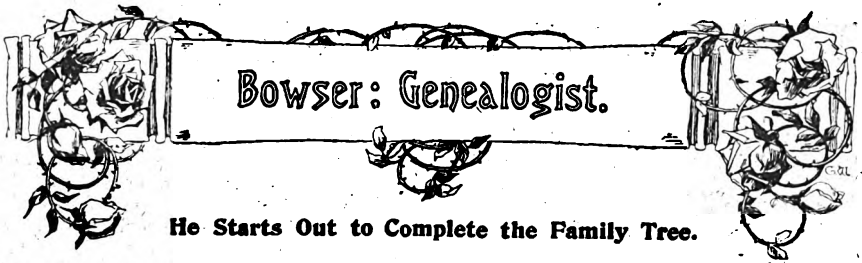

Bowser: Genealogist.

He Starts Out to Complete the Family Tree.

"I HAVE got to run out for an hour or two this evening," observed Mr. Bowser as dinner was finished and he lighted his cigar.

"Business?" queried Mrs. Bowser, without much interest.

"Something in that line. You know I have been anxious for several years to complete my family record. I can trace the Bowsers back 400 years with the exception of two breaks. There's a break between Moses and Elijah Bowser and another between Aaron and Nicodemus. I have been trying to fill in the gaps, and I think I have got hold of the right string at last."

"Have you found some old records?"

"I have found that there are two other Bowser families in town, and I'm hopeful that they will have the records I want. I shall be delighted if they have."

"I don't exactly see why you should care about any Bowser 200 years old," said Mrs. Bowser.

"But I do care a great deal. It makes quite a difference whether your ancestors were ditch diggers or kings, or at least it does to me. As for you, of course you don't care a pin. You were a Tompkins, and I don't think any of the Tompkins family, from No. 1 down, ever amounted to anything great."

"But the Bowsers have?"

"Well, the family tree, as far as completed, shows princes, dukes, barons, governors, and statesmen among them."

"Then the family must be on the decline."

"Woman, what do you mean by that?" shouted Mr. Bowser as his hair began to crackle. "Do you mean to insinuate that I am an unworthy descendant of the name?"

"Not at all," she quietly replied, "only there don't seem to be any more princes and dukes about now. If I were you, I'd let it all go."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. I may not be a prince or a duke, but that I bear the name of Bowser is enough. As this matter is of no earthly interest to you, and as old Tompkins was probably hung for murder, you need not sit up for me."

The cat attempted to follow him out, but he thrust her back and walked swiftly away. There was a Bowser living six streets away. It was in a block of flats, and there were five flights of stairs to climb. Mr. Bowser found the other Bowser with a pipe in his mouth and his feet on the stove. The subject of genealogy was introduced at once, and the new Bowser took his feet off the stove and stood up to say:

"So you are hunting up the old Bowsers, eh?"

"I am."

"Well, I'll give you two minutes to get downstairs. My grandfather was hung for murder, my father was shot as a sheep thief, my brother's down at Portland now, but I don't propose to have anybody come here and rake up my feelings over it. You put it down that there never was a Bowser yet who was any too good and let it go at that."

Mr. Bowser got out. There was another to call on, but he was out. He lived over a public-house, and Mr. Bowser had a little talk with the proprietor, and then returned home. Mrs. Bowser was reading and the cat asleep, and he was not questioned as he got out his family tree to look it over. Not five minutes had passed, however, when the bell rang and the door was opened to a man who gave the name of Bowser, and added: "I was told you was looking for me. Is it a job you have for a poor man out of work?"

"I was seeking to trace the Bowser family back," replied Mr. Bowser.

"Then maybe I can help you, sir, as I have lots of papers."

"What I want to find out first is, who came between Moses and Elijah?"

"Then I'm your man, sir. I'm the one as comes between Moses and Elijah, and if there's a shilling or so coming to me I'll take it now."

"But you can't be the man. Moses Bowser died over 200 years ago, and Elijah followed him within thirty years."

"Makes no difference, sir. My name is Sam Bowser, and I know I come between 'em. You can take my word for it and give me the cash. I don't suppose you expect a gentleman to throw his time away entirely?"

Mrs. Bowser was merciful enough to withdraw and go upstairs and the cat to seek the dark spot under the piano, and while Mr. Bowser was hotly arguing with Sam Bowser the bell rang and two other Bowsers called, Joe and Jim.

"Hearing that you was looking up the Bowser family, sir——" began Joe.

"And seeing as I'm a Bowser myself, sir——" added Jim.

"We thought we'd call and see what it was all about," continued both together.

"Don't trust 'em, sir!" whispered Sam Bowser. "Can't you see that while we looks alike they look altogether different?"

"Gentlemen, did any of you ever hear of Aaron or Nicodemus Bowser?" asked Mr. Bowser.

"We have, sir," replied the three in chorus.

"What Bowser lived between them?"

"I did, sir," chorussed the trio.

The cat came out of hiding and took a look at the four Bowsers and skulked back, and after a strained silence Mr. Bowser was about to move an adjournment when the bell rang again and another Bowser appeared.

"My name, sir," he explained, "is Leviticus Bowser, and I understand that you are hunting up the Bowser family tree."

"But you're not in it!" shouted Joe, Jim, and Sam.

"But I am, and you loafers are simply after money!"

"You're a liar!"

"Stop!" shouted Mr. Bowser. "Now, then, Leviticus, where do you come in?"

"I come in everywhere, sir, and don't you let those other hoaxing Bowsers take you in."

"Hit him!"

"Knock his head off!"

"Kill him dead!"

"Shut up!" roared Mr. Bowser as he waved his arms hysterically. "As I told you, there's a break between Moses and Elijah Bowser, and——"

"That's where I comes in, sir!" shouted Leviticus at the top of his voice.

"But you are not 175 years old."

"But I am, sir, almost 200 years old, and if there is any reward I want it!"

"Hit him!" screamed the others.

"Punch him hard!"

"Knock him out!"

"All of you get out of this!" ordered Mr. Bowser. "The whole four of you are frauds! Out you go!"

Then Joe Bowser, Jim Bowser, Sam Bowser, and Leviticus Bowser turned on Mr. Bowser. A fearful free fight then began, and lasted five minutes. Then the front door opened, and four Bowsers clattered down the street. Mrs. Bowser looked down from the head of the stairs and the cat from the hall, and they saw the fifth Bowser lying prone on the floor. The cat looked up as if inquiring what could be done, but Mrs. Bowser shook her head and sighed and returned to her room

M. Quad.

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A Terrible Anarchist.

And the Story of a Lost Hat.

"Of course, Dr. Garth, as you are not an artist, you cannot see much in it," said Miss Janet Mason, with a somewhat scornful flash from her piercing black eyes. "*I* think it is lovely!"

"It" was the figure before her; an Italian with an abundance of hair, and posed in a special manner as a model for a painting on which she was engaged. Miss Janet meant the hair when she said "It," but I mentally applied the word to the man. That remark about not being an artist was a trifle sarcastic and quite uncalled for.

"He is a good specimen of a villain," I replied.

"Speak your mind," exhorted Miss Janet, with the same sarcasm; "he doesn't understand English, so it's safe enough. I think his hair is just lovely."

"It looks—er—unclean, and reminds me of certain unsavoury spots in this great city," I rejoined. "There are only two historical malo characters, that I remember, who had a lot of hair, and they came to a bad end. Samson and Absalom."

Miss Janet reminded me that one of the two came to grief through a want of hair, and I tried to turn the conversation by asking her not to put her brush in her mouth.

"It's lovely—the hair and the pose, I mean. I've put the brush into my mouth ever since I can remember, and it doesn't seem to have killed me yet! Look at him!"

I was looking at the Italian scamp—I was sure he was a scoundrel, and I said so. At that moment a voice from the doorway exclaimed:

"Poor thing!"

"Do you mean Dr. Garth?" innocently inquired Janet of her sister Alice, who had spoken.

"I mean the model," retorted Alice, exchanging greetings with me as I turned. She was always very commiserating. "Why do you keep the poor man in that uncomfortable pose when you are not working?"

"It is not uncomfortable, and I keep him like that because I know what a trouble it is to get him into position again if I let him get down. But Dr. Garth has kept me talking so long that I might as well give up for to-day." Turning to the ruffian—I was convinced that he was a ruffian!—she said:—"Come down, Paolo!" She proceeded to repeat the order in not very good French, and to tell him to come again on the following day at the same time, but it occurred to me that the Italian understood the words "come down" quite well.

Paolo came down, shook his curls gracefully—I admit that there was some grace in the action—and placed a cap on his head, sticking a pin through his hair and the cap just as a woman would. Then he bowed, wished us adieu, using the Italian word for it, and walked out.

"Looks like Guy Fawkes!" I murmured, but I think that my remark escaped observation.

The model had scarcely passed out of our sight before the door opened to admit Jack Mason, himself an artist. He stalked in easily, with a lazy salutation, and we all instinctively glanced at his hat.

That hat! Everybody who knew the Masons knew that hat; it was part of Jack's being, and his moods were read by the manner in which he wore it. "Most unconventional," was the verdict of his lady acquaintances. He wore it indoors always, and the only occasions when he did not wear it out of doors, was when he didn't wear one at all. It was a soft felt, very grey in tint, which might have been the original hue, but was more probably the work of the fingers of time, and it had an exceedingly wide brim. When he wore that hat fairly on the top of his head the brim resembled a halo, and it denoted that Jack was in a calm frame of mind, at peace with everybody, and probably painting a pastoral landscape or an idyl of the woods; when it was crushed down over his brows, Jack was working desperately hard; when it was cocked over one ear, he was in a light vein and at work on a picture for which his French model was giving sittings; and on those occasions when he pulled that hat off his head—that is, properly speaking, when he really wasn't wearing it at all—his sisters retired hastily to their own rooms before the hat reached the corner into which it was thrown, and left Jack to himself.

On this occasion the hat was in the halo pose, and we talked placidly for a few moments before I left.

It was several days later when I again set eyes on the Italian. I was passing close to the Masons' residence, not intending to call, when I saw the front gate open and a figure glide on to the pavement; I recognised the model. He glanced furtively up and down the street, and a slight gust of wind blew aside the fold of his coat, exposing for a second a clenched hand gripping a knife!

My blood seemed to run cold within me as I felt that my dislike to this man was justified; at any rate, I tried to think that it was justified, for I had certainly taken a violent dislike to him. He occupied so much of Janet Mason's attention! I stepped out hurriedly in his direction; he saw me, turned and fled.

I was after him like a dart, and although he was undoubtedly fleet of foot, I should certainly have overtaken the villain but for a thought that pulled me up within a dozen yards of the Masons' house and made me turn back. Had anyone been hurt?

I hurried up the front steps and pulled the bell violently—very violently, in fact. I was so concerned for their welfare. As the door was not opened speedily, I pulled again at the bell handle, then again and again. Something must have happened to the inmates, of that there was not the shadow of a doubt in my mind. It was lucky that I, a medical man of some standing, chanced to be so near; much may be done if assistance is rendered quickly. I pulled again; time was precious. I heard the sound of voices talking hurriedly, not to say wildly, and I knew that there was confusion and dismay inside. They were losing their heads; so I pulled the bell handle again in an endeavour to bring someone to the door, and this time the handle came off in my hand. Then the door moved, and I saw Janet, Alice, the housemaid and the cook all in the hall as if each had rushed from a different part of the house to answer my peremptory summons.

"Are you all well?" I gasped.

"Yes, thank you!" answered Janet, adding, with additional sweetness in her tones, "Are you?"

There was a whole volume in those two words; this

and the fact that the four women were clearly less disturbed than I, disconcerted me, and I could not reply. Janet suggested that she should take the bell-handle, as I might be tired of holding it—that is, if I had finished with it. There was a surprised, questioning expression on the faces of the others that made me still more uneasy ; I felt that they had a very poor opinion of my sanity, yet I could not say anything in explanation.

All I could utter was : " Are you *sure* you are quite well ? "

" Oh, quite ! " chimed Alice and Janet in chorus, while the two servants murmured something indistinct.

" Are you certain that *you* are—er—quite well, Dr. Garth ? " asked Alice. " You have had a very trying day, of course."

Alice Mason was altogether in error, for I had had a slow day, and I said so. They invited me to enter and have a rest, but I declined on the pretext that I had something important on just then. I walked down to the gate and had gone a few yards along the street when I heard steps behind me, and turned to face Alice Mason.

" Do come back and have a cup of strong tea, Dr. Garth," she pleaded. " It is so refreshing, and will brace up your nerves ! "

I could understand what she thought ; she imagined that I had overtaxed my brain, and was a bit queer in the head ; so I again declined and strode away, only to wish the next minute that I had accepted, and thus gained time and opportunity to make an explanation. Janet Mason had told me more than once, with a flash of those piercing eyes, that I jumped at conclusions and arrived at decisions too promptly, but in actual fact I was generally of an undecided character.

I hardly cared to face the Masons after that, but I did summon up courage to accept an invitation extended by Jack when I saw him out. I was rather relieved to find another visitor, a lady, at the Masons' when I arrived ; they wouldn't be able to say much about that bell affair of the other night. Jack, having given the invitation, was out ; that was so like him. However, we sipped tea and talked till it was time for the other visitor, Mrs. Bryant, to go, and then Jack came in like a whirlwind.

" Where's the hat ? " he roared. He had something resembling a cap perched so far back that it was almost on the back of his neck instead of his head.

" Which hat ? " we all inquired.

" Which hat ? " echoed Jack contemptuously. " Why, *my* hat ! "

" Here it is," said Alice, taking it from his head quietly. " Now, I think you owe Mrs. Bryant an apology for your rather rude conduct."

Jack appeared ready to burst forth again, but checked himself, and was very courtly towards the visitor, who, as she left five minutes later, whispered to me, " So unconventional, isn't he ? "

" Now," said Jack Mason wrathfully, when we were together, " where's my hat ? I don't mean this cap, which I have put on because the other is missing."

" In the hall, Jack, where you left it ! Don't be absurd ! " said Janet.

" Come and find it for me ! " said Jack. " I haven't had that hat for days, simply because I couldn't find it. When I went away the other evening in a hurry, I put on this cap. I haven't touched a brush for days. Now I've come in and feel like work I want that hat, and I've hunted for it, but it isn't to be found ! "

Sure enough, there was no trace of it in the hall. Jack pointed to his bicycle, which stood in a nook ; there were traces of string hanging to the wallet still attached to the handle-bar. No one dared touch Jack's things, and, though it wasn't tidy to allow the bike to remain there in that condition, it had to stay there till Jack removed it. He explained the mystery of the string on the wallet. The wind had been so strong that he had taken off his hat and substituted it by his cap, tying the former to the wallet.

" And I have just noticed that the string is cut ! " he cried. " That hat has been stolen ! "

By whom ? That was where *I* came in. I explained how I had seen Paolo slink out of the doorway like an assassin, with a long knife in his hand. I am not an artist, as Janet Mason has reminded me, but I am a bit of a scribbler, and I was able to tell that story with effect. I am afraid that I added a couple or so of inches to the length of the knife, and I dwelt on Paolo's murderous appearance till I made them look pale. That was why I had rung the bell !

" But why didn't you say so at the time ? " questioned Janet, with uplifted eyebrows.

That was just the point ; why had I not explained ? For the life of me I couldn't answer her, and so I increased my reputation as a lunatic.

What was to be done ? To accuse Paolo was worse than useless, for he would simply deny the charge, and no one had seen the hat in his possession. Jack laughed heartily at the affair, and said that he would not trouble, but Janet remarked that he wouldn't do a stroke of work without it, and she should put the matter in the hands of the police. What did we pay taxes for, she wanted to know, if we didn't put things into the hands of the police ? But she did not wish to prosecute the Italian ; all that was necessary was to get that hat back.

My practice is in a very poor locality, where there are many foreigners, and my next acquaintance with the hat was in a poor tenement to which I had been called to attend a baby. As I examined the child, I was dimly conscious of a figure gliding in, unheeded by the weeping mother, and taking something of a greyish hue from the wall. I had done my best for the infant and given the mother certain final instructions, when another figure came in. I heard a

A slight gust of wind blew aside the fold of his coat, exposing, for a second, a clenched hand gripping a knife !

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pin fall to the ground, something like a cloud swayed about the head of the figure, which had made a stride to the wall, and then I heard Paolo's voice say, in Italian, of which I understood a little, "Traitor!"

It all flashed on me in an instant; the greyish object on the wall was Jack's hat, and it had been taken by a detective from Paolo's poor home!

Paolo went downstairs swiftly, and I followed. At the foot, he came butt against another man, and I, listening on the dark staircase, caught an odd word here and there, but I heard Janet Mason's name uttered fiercely. What devilry was this ruffian at now, and what danger threatened Janet? I must do my best to thwart it and this would help me to retrieve my character.

They went out and again I followed. I was able to keep close behind, for it was slightly foggy, and they were so intent on their talk. I could not hear much, for the Italian was bad and not comprehensible to me, except now and then. But I heard Janet Mason's name no fewer than three times, and the general tone of the talk seemed to be indicative of anger, which, with an Italian, so I concluded, was synonymous with revenge and daggers.

They went into another house, and I was almost chilled while waiting for them. Presently they emerged, walked back to Paolo's lodging, and there separated. There was no doubt Paolo was urging his companion to do something, which the other was doing reluctantly. When the companion was a dozen yards off, Paolo shouted to him in Italian and this time I understood. It was:

"The tall one. Be not afraid! When you are in front of her, you can——!"

He concluded with a forward and a downward motion of his hand, that made me shudder; the companion waved his arm comprehensively, and went off.

My mind was quickly made up; there should be no further charge of indecision. I knew the shortest way to the residence of my friends, the Masons, and I could be there first.

When I turned into the street, having cabbed it part of the way, I could see no sign of the Anarchist, as I dubbed him. This might have been expected, seeing that he would walk.

I decided to wait; I was not going to jump at conclusions. I watched in a convenient doorway, and at length saw him coming.

The scoundrel's nerve appeared to fail him, for he passed and repassed the house three or four times. I expected to see him go up to the door and ring the bell, but he went so far from the house at last that I thought he had given up his murderous intention. Then he turned resolutely, retraced his steps, and went through the gate. I slipped out from my hiding place, and was creeping towards him as he stood on the steps. Instead of ringing, however, and waiting for a chance to strike the fell blow, he rattled at the letter box, into which he dropped something very gingerly, and then turned to bolt. But I was on the scoundrel, and had him by the throat. He had adopted the safer plan of leaving an infernal machine in the letter box; something to be opened by Janet, of course.

The Anarchist gave a great yell as I fell upon him, and we rolled about the gravel path in a fierce struggle. I am told that the maid and the cook shrieked from the top wind in a way that aroused the street, but I heard nothing; I was too busy with the Anarchist. Over and over we rolled, tearing and fighting while an admiring crowd gathered and applauded. I was brought to a sense of my surroundings by my antagonist becoming still, and I saw that Jack Mason, his hat crushed over his brows, was trying to throttle the Anarchist, and Janet and Alice were regarding the scene from the steps.

"Come out into the street!" I yelled. "It'll go off!"

They came out hastily, and the housemaid nearly fell down two flights of stairs in her anxiety to get out. The cook remained at the window, shrieking for the police and the fire brigade, and varying the performance by calling everyone a coward for leaving her to be murdered and blown up.

Jack shouted to her to stop that row, using language that was scarcely polite, but she kept it up.

"What's it all about?" asked Jack, turning to me. He had his opponent by the collar, having dragged him to his feet. "I think we had better go in; this fellow is tame enough."

He looked it, certainly; but I could not permit them to enter.

"It's in the letter box," I explained, "and it's just as likely to go off as not. Anyhow, we might take him in, and the ladies could stay outside."

"But it's beginning to rain!" protested Alice.

"Damp is better than dynamite!" I exclaimed.

But Alice didn't understand, and Janet cut the knot by going in. I sighed for the safety of all, but Alice and Jack, with his captive, followed, and there was nothing else to be done. Jack slammed the door in the face of the eager crowd which, unmindful of danger, pressed on our heels. He slammed it with such violence that I cried: "You've done it!" expecting that the shock would explode the dynamite, but it didn't.

I was asked to give further particulars. As soon as I had said that the Anarchist had dropped something into the letter box, Janet went forward to get it, but I sprang in front of her. I would never allow her to expose herself to such danger.

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed.

That was not kind, but I was firm. She protested that we must get to the bottom of the matter, and it was not fair to ask a policeman to get it out, even if one should ever come along. At last I had a brilliant idea; the Anarchist should take it out himself!

Janet bade him take it out; the wretch trembled as she looked at him, and shrank from her, which caused me to request Jack to hold him more tightly. He took out a very dirty envelope, addressed to Miss Janet Mason.

"For me," said Janet. "I'll open it."

But again I forbade her. Was it not the very thing that the rascals wished? It would explode as she opened it. The Anarchist must do it.

The Anarchist looked at Janet, and shivered as the piercing eye rested upon him. He could scarcely tear the envelope, but at last he got out the sheet of equally dirty paper, and Jack read its contents as the man held it. Written in very bad English, it ran as follows:

"I have ben in houses wher sovrins laid about and I never steal.

"I am not theef. You tell me this day, I stole hat. No! I take it because you refuse to pay 3d. wich is mine for overwork, fifteen minutes. It is my rite. You have hat when you pay, but you send tektif man to steal hat. I am honest.

"PAOLO."

"He's a queer fish, that Paolo!" said Jack. Then he roared with laughter. "To think that Garth took it for dynamite!"

Then they all laughed, even the Anarchist forcing a smile.

"It's all very well," I observed frigidly. Of course, when I used those words I meant that it was *not* all very well. "But how did it all come about?"

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We spoke to the Anarchist in French, Italian, and broken English, all of bad quality, and we got the story out of him.

Paolo had demanded threepence extra for posing for a quarter of an hour longer, at the last sitting but one, and Janet had refused; thereupon Paolo had taken the hat, "which was not worth more than threepence"—this made Jack wince, and I was glad. Paolo intended to give it up when he got his rights. He had asked Guiseppe to write, not knowing English well enough himself, after the recovery of the hat by the detective, and upbraid Janet, at the same time demanding the threepence which they would share. Guiseppe was to present the letter to Janet in the place of Paolo, who was now afraid of the "bad eye." (I explained that this meant "evil eye," an old Italian superstition.) Guiseppe would not fall under the influence of Janet's "evil eye."

But Guiseppe's courage had failed him, and he had grown fearful of the "evil eye"; he had almost decided to return and tell Paolo that he (Paolo) ought to have been more brave, and have told the signorita himself. He had plucked up courage finally to drop the letter in the box, and then——.

"Exactly!" said Jack. "Our friend here mauled you terribly." That was cool, seeing that Jack himself had nearly throttled the Anarchist. "Well, you seem willing to do a lot of work for a small wage; you must be used to sweating. Here's five shillings for you. Now be off! I have the hat, as you see."

The man smiled, bowed, and retired in high glee. There was a good deal of talk after his departure, which I need not repeat, but I found that it was a private detective who had stolen the hat from Paolo.

"A private detective!" I cried. "But you don't pay taxes to maintain the police force and then employ——"

But Janet cut me short.

"I am certain you are working too hard," she said, with cutting, pretended sympathy. "You really must go away for a rest."

"Yes, do, Garth," chimed in Jack. "It will do you good; you are a bit unstrung. I'll ask you for the five shillings given to that poor fellow when you come back; never mind it now!"

"Come out into the street!" I yelled. "It'll go off!"

And I heard so much about that hat from everybody during the next week, that I deemed it advisable to take the Masons' advice and go away.

George Day.

Much Pressed.

"DID you take much pressing before you accepted Jack?" asked Mabel of her friend Ethel who had just got engaged. "Oh, a lot. And then Jack is so impulsive, you know. He nearly squeezed all the breath out of my body."

Confessions.

"CAN you forgive me and love me still?" said the new-made bride, "when I confess that my teeth are artificial?" "Thank goodness!" cried the groom, as he snatched off his wig; "now I can cool my head."

Solidity.

"THERE was an annoying hitch in the great ocean scene in my play last night," said Bronson Hoyt, with a sad smile. "When the hero jumped off the raft to save the heroine, he got off in the wrong place, and one of the waves kicked him. It seemed to knock all the sense out of him, for he got up and walked ashore." "What did the heroine do?" "She sat on a wave and laughed."

L'Enfant Terrible.

"ARE you coming when I call you, or is there going to be trouble?" said papa to his four-year-old daughter. "I tink dere's going to be trouble, papa," replied the tot, keeping out of his reach.

Riches and Prudence.

HE (to the Matrimonial Agent): "I've married that rich party you engaged for me, but she won't give me any money." "And what could you ask better? Not only have you a rich wife, but also a prudent one."

Presence of Mind.

MRS. F. (petulantly): "You never kiss me now." Mr. F.: "The idea of a woman of your age wanting to be kissed! One would think you were a girl of eighteen." Mrs. F. (sharply): "What do you know about girls of eighteen?" Mr. F. (with great presence of mind): "Why, my dear, weren't you eighteen once yourself?"

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FROM BEST MAN TO BRIDEGROOM.

How a Simple Mistake Brought it all About.

"But I may count on you?" Tom asked. "You know you promised."

"Yes," I replied, "I promised, and I'll keep my promise. I'll be your best man. Not that I wouldn't like to get out of it," I went on; "but if you insist, I suppose that——"

"Oh, come now," said Tom, "don't go in for cynicism; that's cheap. Of course, I'm willing to admit that from your point of view, perhaps, Dorothy Melton may have treated you badly enough, but I wouldn't revile the whole sex, and rail at matrimony, and all that. You'll get over it in time, you know."

Tom is an old friend, and allows himself liberties. I kept my head, and replied calmly:

"I am not cynical, and I'm not 'railing' at matrimony. Moreover, that little affair with the young lady you mention, which I have quite forgotten——"

Tom smiled in a peculiarly trying manner.

"Which I have entirely forgotten—" I repeated.

"And will forget anew every day you live," said Tom.

"That has had nothing whatever to do with my determination to devote myself entirely to my profession. I have already frittered away too much of my life on what we are pleased to call 'society.' But, of course, I'll keep my promise to you."

As the time of Tom's wedding approached I wrote him that I could not get down to Riverton till the afternoon of the wedding day.

I had forgotten that Uncle William Clarkson lived at Riverton, or I might have been prepared for him; but before the train had fairly stopped at the station, Uncle William was at my side, grasping my hand and reaching for my bag. "Here you are at last," he was saying. "I've been to meet every train this morning. You've got to go up to the house with me and get something to eat before the wedding."

"But Tom——" I interposed.

"Oh, that's all right," said Uncle William. "There's a 'phone in the house; you can let Tom know you are here, and that's all that's necessary."

Uncle William called up Tom by telephone, and after a few minutes' chat with him I felt somewhat reassured. Dinner was announced very early, and was soon over. As the clock chimed one I went upstairs to make a hurried toilet. But where was my bag? I hurried downstairs again and put the question to Uncle William.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "we must have left it at the station!"

He hurried down to fetch the bag, promising to return "before you know I'm gone," but the minutes slipped away, and the carriage drove up to the gate before he got back. He finally came, however.

"Here you are," he said, as he handed me the bag. "Now, you want to hurry, young man, or you'll be late."

I fairly jumped into my clothes, trusting to luck for appearance. As I was concluding my toilet, Uncle William tapped at the door.

"It's five minutes to two!" he exclaimed.

I couldn't say exactly what I wanted to say, so I contented myself by giving my tie a vicious twist. Three minutes later I dashed down the hall, threw a good-bye to Aunt Margaret, and hurried into the yard.

The coachman was driving away.

"Hi, there!" shouted Uncle William from the front steps. "Hold on there, driver! Wilson, stop that carriage!"

Wilson was evidently Uncle William's next door neighbour. He was leisurely proceeding from his front gate to his own domicile. He turned round slowly and looked at the carriage and then at Uncle William.

"What for?" he asked. "What's the matter with it?"

"Hi, there, driver!" shouted Uncle William again, as I tore down the path.

The coachman drew in his horses with an air of impatient expectancy.

"What in the world do you mean?" cried Uncle William, puffing in anger behind me.

"Yes, what do you mean?" I echoed, "driving off without me?"

"Why, sir," said the evidently greatly puzzled coachman, with a nod of his head toward Mr. Wilson, "he said for——"

"Well, well, well!" cried Mr. Wilson, joining us on the pavement. "What does all this mean, anyway? What are you keeping this carriage here for?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Uncle William, a light breaking in upon him, "you've made a mistake here, Wilson. This is a carriage I ordered to take my nephew to the wedding."

"Oh, I fancy not," said Mr. Wilson, bristling up more than ever. "This is a carriage I ordered to take my niece to the concert."

The two men glared at each other like wild animals, and I turned from one to the other in hopeless perplexity.

"But, look here," put in Uncle William, "Dick's best man, and he mustn't be late at the wedding."

"I can't help that," retorted Mr. Wilson. "My niece has to sing and mustn't be late at the concert, either."

"I'll tell you," cried Aunt Margaret, with sudden inspiration, "why can't they go together? The concert hall is only a little way beyond Christ Church. I know your niece won't object if I explain."

Aunt Margaret dashed out into the street towards the carriage, and I followed, wiping my moist brow, bewailing my crumpling linen, and consumed with impatience.

In a few seconds I heard Aunt Margaret making a hurried explanation, which concluded with "Awfully good of you, I'm sure; but I knew you'd consent under the circumstances;" then the door was flung open, Uncle William gave me a push from behind, while Aunt Margaret murmured introductions, and I found myself stepping into a carriage which seemed filled with flowers and fluffy white stuff, from the midst of which peered the face of—Dorothy Melton!

"Why—Dick—Mr. ——" she cried, half-rising from her seat.

I started back with a confused attempt at an apology, but Uncle William hastily slammed the door, and with a

commanding "Drive quickly now!" motioned the driver to start. The horses were off with a jump, and I sank into the seat opposite the young girl whom six months ago I had sworn never to see again.

"Miss Melton," I began, feeling that I must say something, "I'm extremely sorry to intrude upon you in this manner. I had no idea——"

"Oh, pray do not mention it," said Dorothy. "I am, of course, extremely glad to be of any service whatever to Mrs. Clarkson, and it would be too bad for you to be late at the wedding."

The driver was evidently intent upon reaching the church in time. He turned a corner so sharply that just as I was about to stammer out a commonplace about the wedding, we both were nearly thrown from our seats. Dorothy threw up her hand, her roses fell in confusion, and as I bent forward her dainty fingers lightly brushed my face—

"Oh, Dorothy! Dorothy!" I cried; and then——

I'm sure that I couldn't tell what I said. I only know that the words I had been holding back, the love that I had been trying to stifle for six months, burst from me, and before we reached the next corner Dorothy lifted her shining eyes, and through tears said:

"Oh, Dick! Dick!" and I knew everything was right, and wished that Christ Church was twenty miles away.

The carriage pulled up at the church door in the nick of time, and dashed away again to leave Dorothy at the Concert Hall where she had been singing for a few months.

I found Tom in the vestry, so supremely happy that he had not even noticed my tardiness—but, for that matter. I walked in the clouds all the afternoon, and noticed nothing whatever that happened at his wedding, so we are quits on that score.

Dorothy and I will be married in September, and Uncle William, who insists that his "good management" brought it all about, has promised to set us up with a carriage of our own on the day of the wedding.

J. Pounds.

THEN AND NOW.

The Tale of a Love that was Lost.

"Am I to understand, then, that you refuse to marry me?"

"Yes, that is what you are to understand," gravely, but with a suspicion of something like mirth in her eyes.

"May I ask why, then?"

"Because I don't love you," she said airily, "that is why, a very simple reason, no doubt, you will say, but one that carries a great deal of weight, with me."

"You could not," he remarked, "have said that three years ago.

"You loved me *then*." It was a cowardly, nay cruel thing to say, but his mood was bitter.

She flushed, stung by his tone, but looking up into his face with brave eyes, answered quietly, "You are right, I could not." Then, she shuddered inwardly, to think what she had suffered on account of this man. And now, did she feel anything but rather a wild desire to laugh in his face?

"Great Heaven," said he, "I wish I had known then."

"Known what?" said she, and something leapt into her eyes—was it anger, or merely contempt? but he said with a tremble in his voice:

"Known that you loved me."

"Is that quite honest?" she said rather huskily. "Did you not know that I, a very young and ignorant girl"—then stopped, finding a difficulty in going on. He couldn't look into those clear and somewhat scornful eyes, and say he hadn't known only too well that she had loved him, so he remained silent.

"However," she went on, in quite a cold tone, "It was only a girl's fancy after all, as I very soon found out when you went away, and now," blithely, "it doesn't matter in the least," smiling into his face, "and—shall we talk of something else?"

"It evidently doesn't matter," he said gloomily, pulling at his moustache, "and this subject at present interests me very much."

Like a man he was beginning to think that he was the one who had cause for offence. But she, thinking of the days and nights of misery she had passed, and thanking Heaven at the same time, that he would never know what she had suffered, was rather enjoying the process of turning the tables on the man, which I am afraid was cruel of her.

So she began to hum a little tune softly, under her breath.

He turned round upon her in a moment, his eyes flashing.

"And you can actually sing," he said passionately, "and after all was I to blame, it was more my misfortune than my fault that I——" then he paused.

"That you didn't find out then, that I was as nice as I am," she said flippantly. "I quite agree with you at any rate," she went on, "that it was a great misfortune not to have found *that* out!"

"Sometimes mistakes can be remedied," he questioned.

"Sometimes," she said, "but not, I'm afraid in this case."

"If you were to marry me," he said, smiling and stretching out his hands to her, where she stood in front of him so tantalisingly calm and self-possessed, and so infinitely attractive, "I know I could make you happy."

All his ill temper had vanished now, he was so very much in earnest.

She looked at him, not unkindly, "It is a pity," she said musingly, and half relentingly, it was such an irony of Fate that things had turned out like this *now*. What would she not have given to have heard those words of his, to have seen that look in his eyes, three years ago.

But she was determined, with the memory of those years in her mind, not to let anything he could say touch her, although she was really sorry for him, but all feeling for him except pure friendliness had passed away long ago.

"It is not too late to mend matters, is it?" he went on imploringly. "Just think what our lives would be."

He looked so handsome standing there, his dark eyes looking into hers, those eyes she used to love so much, his strong, straight figure leaning lightly against the gate, that she turned her head away, she felt as if she would rather not look at him.

"Yes, it is too late," she answered, "much too late, it

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would never do now. I know it quite well, besides"—she paused, and a half smile came over her face.

He saw it, and his eyes flamed at once, as a thought struck him.

"I believe there is someone else," he said. *That* had never struck him until this moment, a man thinks if a woman has once loved him, she will always do so, whatever *he* may do.

"Perhaps there is," she said.

"I might have known it," he said bitterly, his face clouding over and his clenched hands falling at his sides, "That is so like a woman."

"So like a man, you mean," she retorted, "to think that a woman ought always to feel just as he feels, and *when* he feels, to dance when he pulls the string! Yes," she continued, her voice changing, her blue eyes melting, not with feeling for the present moment, but for that far off three years ago. "Yes, I did love you, Mark, in those days, loved you with all my heart. I used to long for just a sight of you, and feel miserable for days if I had missed you when you came to see us." Her voice had grown tender, and her eyes gazed into the far-off haze of the summer morning. "Ah!" turning suddenly upon him with eyes in which a mist of tears had gathered, "a man little knows what he is doing when he throws away love like that."

"But how could I tell?" he said wildly, "how could I know? Oh, dearest, do have some mercy upon me, I never knew you cared so much."

He knew that only the fact that it had all passed away made it possible for her to be telling him this now, and he also realised at last that this was the end.

"I am so sorry, believe me, Mark," she said, "that it has all turned out like this, but it is quite, quite, impossible now."

That "now" always maddened him. He bit his lip. "Well, there is no manner of use, I suppose, in prolonging this discussion," he said. "Good-bye, Angela," and he tried to smile in her face, "I hope you will always be happy, though you and I are not going to pass our lives together."

Her eyes were full of tears now, as she held out her hands. She couldn't speak. If things had only been different, if she could only have said "yes" now. How she wished she could. He took her hands in both of his, pressed his lips to her forehead, and was gone down the road the next minute.

"Poor fellow," she said sobbing, "but it was his own fault."

Then she turned and went in the opposite direction over the fields to her home.

* * * * *

Three years ago Ferrers had been staying at Merelands with some cousins of Angela's, who were also his cousins. He had been greatly taken with her, but then he lived in a chronic state of falling in love, or thinking he was in love, with most of the pretty women he came across. And he was always looked upon as a man who would never marry. Still, he really did fall in love with Angela, and for a time contemplated asking her to share his very large income and his ancestral home.

But as time went on, he, as he always did in the long run, could not make up his mind to take the fatal plunge, little knowing that he would never be so near happiness again. So he deliberately, and of his own free will, thrust it from him, half fearing that he had made a fool of himself by letting her go, and sincerely hoping that he hadn't.

As for Angela, all the sunshine went out of her life when Mark went away, and for many a day she suffered terribly. But she kept her sorrow to herself, as girls have a way of doing, and no one ever guessed, she thought and hoped, that her life had been one of torture because of this man.

But one there was who did guess; he guessed because of his own love for Angela, which had always lain dormant in his nature, but it was there all the same, strong and true, and in the days of her struggle and distress, he was always at hand, striving, as best he might, to help and befriend her; and in the end he was rewarded, and Angela felt what it would be like to have a man ever ready to devote himself to gratifying her lightest wish, and to rely on, to shield her from trouble.

She thought she should never love again in the same way she had loved Mark Ferrers, and perhaps she never did, but fortunately there are many different kinds of love, and many different ways of loving, and the best and most lasting are not always the most passionate.

So when she met Ferrers again after three years, she was more than half engaged to Hubert Langdon. As for Mark, he had been struck by her much developed and improved beauty. He was a man who was most susceptible to beauty in any shape or form, and this time he had no doubt in his mind as to his feeling for her. He wondered a hundred times a day how he had ever had any doubt, and reviled his folly when he found out that it was all to no purpose; Angela, beyond being exceedingly friendly, had evidently no stronger feeling for him.

She met all his attempts at sentiment with a laugh and a jest, and succeeded in making him thoroughly miserable, poor man, for Mark Ferrers was at last genuinely in love. In the whole world, he thought, could there be a woman to compare to Angela. Such beauty, such a form, and such charm of manner. What an outrageous fool he had been to have passed this woman over when he actually had had the game in his own hands.

He had been thoroughly spoilt. Being left his own master at an early age, he had had only to wish for a thing and he got it. And now he thought the only thing that he had ever wanted really, or so it seemed to him, was denied him. And it had been his own fault, there was no one else to blame but himself. There lay the sting.

* * * * *

Years after, Angela Langdon and Mark Ferrers met again. He was then rather a gloomy, and somewhat discontented man. His marriage had not been a success, his wife caring more for his wealth and position than anything else; and as he was a man who had had an ardent desire to be loved for himself, and not his possessions, this scarcely concealed feeling of hers galled him bitterly.

Angela, on the other hand, had certainly chosen the better part, and was radiantly happy and content. Her husband and children idolised her, and there was no woman more liked and admired in London society.

They met at a ball during the season. "I am so glad to see you again," she said, with the old quick smile he knew so well.

"And you," he said, grasping her hand, and looking into her face with his dark, discontented eyes, "I see the world has treated you very well, you look splendid to-night."

"Yes, I am very happy," she said simply. "By the way, I hear you are coming to live quite close to us, I am so glad."

"Yes, I saw Park End was in the market," he said, "so I bought it. I always liked that part of the world." He paused, then went on, "I remember some very happy days spent there, but perhaps you have forgotten," rather bitterly.

"Oh, no, I remember, too," she said gravely, "and I am not one to forget old friends." And then her face broke into smiles as a tall, fair man crossed the room and came towards them.

"Have you forgotten, Angela," he said, looking down at her and smiling, "that you promised to go on to the Avondales?"

"No, I remember," she said, "but," turning to Ferrers, "did you two ever meet in the old days? This is the Mr. Ferrers, Hubert, who has bought Park End, you know."

So the two men talked commonplaces for a few minutes, and then he bore her off.

Mark looked after them moodily as they disappeared through the gay throng.

"What an idiotic fool I was," he muttered, "to lose all that."

So we throw away our happiness in this world, unthinkingly, for as it says somewhere in the words of the poet,

"Beauty is easy enough to win,
But one isn't loved every day."

V. M. Johnson.

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Poor Sir Caliban.

Which Tells of a Bitter Revenge.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Pietersen's Scheme—and Another's.

"Wish you were not your father's daughter? Nonsense, Eileen!"

"From your point of view, perhaps; from mine—well, there is no need to repeat it."

"Now, Eileen, don't be so horribly rude!" said Cora Meade, smiling that uncomfortable, arctic smile of hers. "I'm afraid you don't rightly appreciate Sir Ughtred Armour. He is not, we know, everything that you and I would choose for a husband. I mean, that he's—well—he might be better looking; and—a little taller, and——"

"He is hideous! misshapen! impossible!" broke in Eileen Pietersen, her cheeks aflame. "But," she went on indignantly, "since you think so highly of him—why—marry him! for I will not! I give you free and full leave."

The two girls were in the prettiest room of the brand new Park Lane house of Rolf Pietersen, millionaire saloon proprietor from somewhere in the Western world.

Some six months before, he had sprung himsel fupont he social life of London.

But for once, social London was cold and unresponsive. Mr. Pietersen's undoubtedly heavy bank balance was not sufficient to purchase the necessary hall-mark. The man himself was of the nature of that "sow's ear" that could never, by any twist or turn of fortune, be fashioned into a "silk purse."

Plus the money, he was still the bar-keeper, and with all the average bar-keeper's undesirable qualities.

The mystery was how he came to have such a daughter, for Eileen Pietersen was one of those rare combinations, where form and nature are alike sweet and beautiful.

Not mawkishly so, for the self-confident poise of her shapely little head indicated evident capability, and a well-balanced will-power.

Cora Meade, her companion, is not so readily described. Dark of hair and swarthy of complexion, her eyes were of that shifty kind that never can look straight into your own.

She had, years before, been at a school in Germany with Eileen, who had never made a friend of her there, for reasons easy to be understood when their several natures are properly considered.

Eileen, therefore, was more surprised than gratified when Cora called upon her at the Carlton the week of her father's and her arrival in town from oversea. But Cora was of that limpet-like character that "sticks" in spite of everything.

A clever woman, she made herself almost a necessity to the new arrivals, although disappearing with mysterious regularity at noon of most days. How she lived, from what source she derived her income, the Pietersens had no idea. She always seemed to be fairly provided, and was certainly always well groomed, in the very latest tailor-made style.

Pietersen himself did not like her; like scarcely ever takes to like—they interfere with each other's little schemes.

The wealthy ex-bar-keeper's one ambition was to shine in good English society. This he hoped to accomplish through his beautiful daughter. But the "fairy prince," otherwise the "lord of high degree," was shy, and disinclined to take Pietersen, as well as that gentleman's child and heiress.

But for a strangely fortuitous circumstance (according to his own point of view), and just when he had almost made up his mind to quit England and to seek some less exacting social circle, either on the Continent of Europe or on the more distant Australian variety, fortune threw in his way a man strangely suited to his purposes.

Eileen and himself were wandering about county Northumberland in search of a vacant castle, or manor, or abbey, that the latter might buy or hire for a country seat.

Being one day at an old inn, they found the only sitting room occupied by a gentleman having his dinner. The people of the house seemed very deferential to him; this, in itself, rousing Pietersen's interest and curiosity.

Their own table being spread, the man of money opened the conversation with a query on the subject of his quest for a "place." This naturally led to an exchange of cards, Pietersen perceiving that the stranger was powerfully attracted by Eileen.

Sir Ughtred Armour, Bart., of Armour Chase, County Northumberland, had been, from his birth, the sport of fortune; in that he combined in his person all the father and daughter's pre-conceived notions of human ugliness and malformation.

Dwarfish, misshapen, hideous, he had brooded so long upon his enforced social isolation that when, as now, he encountered a lovely girl, sweet beyond any he had ever before seen, it was not wonderful that he should allow himself to forget in the sight of her his own disqualifications.

Pietersen was quick to perceive this, and to rapidly build upon it a scheme for working out his own ends.

Briefly, the trio, or rather the two men, got very friendly; the arrangement just before they separated being that Sir Ughtred should pay the Pietersens a visit in town a month from that date.

Even then Eileen, though she was not blind to the baronet's admiration, had no suspicion of her father's ultimate plans and intentions.

When, therefore, a month later, and while Cora Meade was staying a week with them at Cookham, up the river, Pietersen intimated to his daughter that he wished her to encourage Sir Ughtred by any and every means, her whole soul revolted against the suggestion, and she came to loath the very idea of the unnatural proposal.

They had only come up to town the morning of the conversation between Cora and Eileen; the very day, in fact, upon which Sir Ughtred was expected.

Like all immensely wealthy men, Rolf Pietersen had a private secretary.

In his case it was one Harold Blythe, a stalwart young Devonian, fresh from Oxford, and, six months before, tempted by Pietersen's splendid offer of £500 a year and nothing to do. A cadet of a poor, but good family, this seemed wealth beyond the dreams of avarice

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Somehow the millionaire failed to notice a growing friendliness between his secretary and his daughter. The cutest man is blind sometimes. But so it was, that Eileen, whose fate it had been never before to meet with one of young Blythe's attractive personality, responded, it may be said, almost naturally to his warm feeling for her.

Hence the very thought of an alliance with one like Sir Ughtred filled her with dismay, and a determination to rebel at all hazards.

From the very first moment of the baronet's arrival in Park Lane, Cora Meade let him see that *she* was not indisposed to give him an opportunity of making *her* chatelaine of Armour Chase. She knew, only too well, Pietersen's plans, and so exercised her wiles when *tête-à-tête* with her victim, and when the master of the house was abroad or occupied elsewhere.

It was the last day of Cora's visit, and at the breakfast table Pietersen had expressed himself in strong terms with reference to the absence thereat of Eileen.

That Harold Blythe was also an absentee did not trouble him much, as the previous evening the secretary had requested leave for a few days to visit his home.

Almost immediately after obtaining permission he had packed and left the house.

"Sir Ughtred," said Cora, boldly, in spite of Pietersen's presence. "Isn't this a lovely day for a drive?"

But the insinuative remark fell flat.

"Yes," replied the baronet. "I arranged last night, after much persuasion, and on the condition of fine weather, to drive Miss Pietersen to Richmond."

"Oh!" snapped Cora, somewhat unguardedly.

"Well," remarked Pietersen, "We will see what Eileen has to say about it," and he told the butler to summon his daughter's maid.

In five minutes the butler returned.

"Fernshaw" (the maid) "is not to be found, sir!"

"Not to be found! But she must be found!"

"And, sir," continued the butler hesitatingly, "Miss Pietersen—so the housekeeper has heard from the milkman—Miss Pietersen went out this morning about seven, with Fernshaw, and hasn't come back yet, sir."

The words that rose to Pietersen's lips were not uttered then, for before he could speak, a footman brought in a telegram.

Reading it, he tore it into shreds, and shouting in his old Western manner, "She's married that skunk Blythe!" sat stupidly staring at the man who had given him the wire.

The one to take the news most curiously was Sir Ughtred. It was a severe blow to him, and he might have been expected to say and do something that would express his disappointment.

That which he really did puzzled Pietersen, and caused Cora to experience a feeling of uncomfortable uncertainty as to what he actually meant.

Calling the butler to his side he gave some orders with regard to the packing of his traps and their conveyance to Euston.

Then, without a word to Pietersen, who, ignorant of what was correct, did not resent it, Sir Ughtred just looked keenly and in a contemplative sort of way at Cora for a second or two, and, bowing gravely to her, left the room.

It showed Pietersen's short-sightedness when, Sir Ughtred gone, he turned fiercely to Cora, and accused her of being an aider and abettor in his daughter's elopement.

"You wanted the titled little monster for yourself!" he cried, "but if you *do* succeed in getting him, my best wish for you is that he'll lead you such a dance that you'll never have a minute's peace till the day of your death!"

CHAPTER II.

THE LITTLE TEA-SHOP OFF PICCADILLY.

THE *habitues* of the place had been curiously puzzled as to what had become of the fair proprietress for the space of one whole week.

She was so in the habit of mixing, in a pleasantly familiar way, with her patrons, that her sudden absence created more than the usual "storm in a teacup."

The "neat handed Phyllises of the establishment" were all very well, but they did not satisfy "society," especially the male portion of it; they sighed for the geisha in chief.

"Cora Meade," declared one peculiarly idle exquisite, with a pretty talent for epigram, "is one of the cleverest little women I know," which certainly wasn't saying much, "and deucedly handsome too, don't you know!"

The lady undoubtedly answered to the gentleman's somewhat florid description of her, though character experts might possibly, and with reason, have felt inclined to call her cleverness by another, and not quite so polite a name.

The morning after the Park Lane incident, on the stroke of "one," in fact, the lady in question sat in her own private snuggery at the extreme rear of the premises, reading over, for the twentieth time, and with every facial sign of semi-satisfied bewilderment, a letter of no great length, but one evidently to be taken, as it was written, seriously.

"Why should he ask to see me?—Why should he?" and the glitter in Cora's steely-blue eyes, became python-like in its intensity and fascinative power.

"Bachelor's Club,
"July 17th, '01.

"Sir Ughtred Armour presents his compliments to Miss Cora Meade, and begs permission to call upon her to-day (Friday), between one and two, at her place of business.

"Sir Ughtred Armour particularly wishes Miss Meade to believe that the matter upon which he desires to see her, is one intimately concerning, and of considerable importance to herself."

"Something that intimately concerns *me*, and is of considerable importance to me!"

The swing and click of a door, followed by a peculiar halting tread in the outer shop.

Cora felt instinctively that she must face her fate, whatever it might be, must summon to her aid every artifice and device, with which she was so liberally endowed by nature, so that she might be equal to emergency or opportunity, as occasion offered.

Springing to her feet, she, as it were, pulled taut the cord of her determination, and smiting smartly one clenched hand into the open palm of the other, threw wide the half-glazed door of communication.

He stood there, in the maze of empty seats, and daintily appointed little tables, no business being ever done until well into the afternoon.

Cora's visitor could not but gaze in absolute admiration at her, as she gracefully posed in the doorway of her sanctum, on her lips a smile of welcome, hard to be doubted for its genuineness, so like was it to that which it purported to be.

"Miss Meade!" he said courteously inclining his head; and this with a dignity new to him, and altogether ungrotesque because of its impressive gravity. "You received my note?"

"Oh, yes, Sir Ughtred! and, though, of course, delighted to see you, am, I can assure you, quite at a loss to rightly interpret its meaning."

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"Yes?—If you will kindly favour me with just a few moments—this is not your busiest hour, I think—I fancy I shall be able to answer your question in a manner satisfactory not to myself only, but to you."

He spoke the last half dozen words with strangely insistent emphasis; the while that he limped into the cosily-furnished little room, and deliberately laid his hat upon the table.

Cora Meade had hitherto prided herself upon her superior strength of will-power; maintaining that no one—man or woman—could in any way influence her to do or say that which was directly opposed to her own inclination.

Before, however, another word was uttered, she had come to believe that, in this respect at any rate, she had at last met with her master.

"What are you doing? How dare you!" she cried, as the dwarf suddenly and swiftly strode to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

As he turned and faced her, still silent, his eyes seemed to her to burn into her very soul.

"This is intolerable! Sir Ughtred Armour! And—and I will call assistance! I—you—are a coward, sir! A mean, despicable coward! A——h!"

Her left hand was on the table supporting her, and he had gripped it by the wrist, until it stung again.

Then he spoke, not loudly, or as a man whose pulse throbs high, but dangerously low—almost in a whisper.

"Please to sit down," he said; but he did not let go her wrist, so that when seated, her eyes, howsoever unwillingly, were on a level with his.

"You must forgive me," he went on, "for this my rough wooing."

Her lesser will had now retired before the greater.

"Yes," she murmured, in veritable dream fashion, "I forgive you."

"That is well. To-morrow at this time you will close this place for ever, will proceed, absolutely unattended, to a church indicated on this paper, which I will leave with you. There I will meet you, and you will marry me."

"I will marry you."

"Without doubt or question?"

"Without doubt or question."

"We shall then, as man and wife, leave London for the north, for Armour Chase, the home a little bird has whispered to me that you, my well-beloved, esteem beyond all other."

"Beyond all other."

"I am glad! Because it is not given to every woman to realise her ideal."

It must not be imagined that Sir Ughtred hypnotised Cora Meade in the ordinary or better sense; he simply used his superior will-power to effect that which he desired.

As for Cora, frightened though she was at this dwarf's manner of making his marriage proposal, it so coincided with her own views that she the more readily inclined herself to a policy of non-resistance.

When, therefore, the baronet departed with a significant "Remember!" the first two afternoon customers entering from the street, as he went out into the hot sunshine, he left his strangely promised wife satisfied in a way, but with a lurking suspicion of something, which she could neither define nor understand.

CHAPTER III.

On the Way to the North.

Sir Ughtred and Lady Armour were alone in the "parlour" compartment the baronet had secured.

For the first thirty miles of the journey he had been absolutely silent. She had tried to open a conversation several times, but with no success. Then, once between the last occasion and Crewe, he just asked if she needed refreshment.

On her replying that she required nothing, he relapsed again into his former state.

It was immediately after leaving Crewe that he abruptly addressed her.

"Do you want to know why I have married you?"

His tone and manner frightened her again, and for the moment she could not answer him.

"Do you want to know?" he repeated, this time more harshly.

"I suppose so," she said at length.

"It is as well that you *should* know," he went on, quite ignoring her word of acquiescence. "In the first place, you came between me and Eileen Pietersen. No—no! Don't interrupt me. I *know* it. But for you, and your encouragement of young Blythe's love for Eileen, she would have been mine—mine! For I loved her—I love her still! I shall always love her! And I vowed, from the moment of the arrival of that telegram, to marry you, and to make you regret to your dying day the part you played in wrecking my heart."

"You lie!" she blazed out at him.

"I think not. Else, what meant all your oglings, and smilings at me! Were they not the desperate strugglings for my name! my title! my position! of a lady whose methods were not always above reproach?"

"You lie! I tell you."

"Well, if I do, it is too late now to mend matters, or alter my opinion.

"You have your wish, title, position, and a certain amount of wealth (the amount, I may tell you, is not large, for my family has been improverished for the past two generations) well, I hope you will enjoy them. I warn you, however, that you will have to do so in my company alone, for, so long as I live, at any rate, Armour Chase will not see you beyond its boundaries."

"Why! You would make me a prisoner?"

"If you like to think so—yes; and as this is the very last time in our married life that Eileen Pietersen's name is to be mentioned between us, I will speak it to repeat that it is for your share in losing me my love, that I will make your life with me as miserable and as unbearable as it is possible for it to be."

* * * * * * *

Sir Ughtred and Lady Armour do not visit. He gives out that his wife is an invalid, and that, though it does not satisfy the curiosity of the country-side, settles the matter from his own point of view. To all inquiries he replies: "Thanks! Lady Armour is the same as usual," and there is an end of it.

* * * * * * *

Mr. Harold Blythe, private secretary to a Cabinet Minister is, with his lovely wife, a *persona grata* in London society.

But that happened after Mr. Peitersen's return to the scene of his money-making. Then the latter married again (for he declined absolutely to recognise his daughter or her husband) and was (according to a recent newspaper report) shot in a dispute with a kindred spirit, in a Chicago club.

It is on the cards that, after all, Eileen and her husband may yet enjoy the ex-barkeeper's millions, for the American Minister to this country is moving on their behalf, both Harold and Eileen being great favourites of his.

Ralph Enderby.

Lady: "I don't like this picture as well as I did the last one you took of me." Photographer: "Ah, madam, I have not the artistic taste that I had when I was young; and, besides, my camera is getting old."

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OUR NEW SERIAL.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

The First few Chapters in Brief.

JOHN MANSFIELD, a wealthy banker, Esther, his only child, Alec Scarsdale, his confidential clerk, and Seaton Revelle, a gentleman who had made the banker's acquaintance on the Continent, are seated together under the verandah of Mr. Mansfield's house, partaking of afternoon tea.

"This afternoon an utter stranger called upon me—a bearded, sunburnt fellow, just home from South Africa. . . . and took from round his waist a money-belt stuffed with bank-notes and diamonds, and wanted me to take charge of it. . . . He was so persistent that I agreed to lock the belt in my safe and return it to him on Monday," the banker remarked.

"Extraordinary!" said Seaton Revelle. "Easily won, they say, easily lost."

Shortly afterwards Revelle writes a letter to a Benjamin Beard in London, which he posts himself. During his absence, Alec Scarsdale, who is treated by the banker almost as his own son, tells Mr. Mansfield of his love for Esther, and, with tears in his eyes, the old man gives the pair his fondest blessing.

The next afternoon there is a meeting in the woods near to the banker's house, between Seaton Revelle and a gentleman from London named Benjamin Beard. A whispered conversation takes place, and a little packet of powder passes into Revelle's possession.

"Half of that, Marquis, is quite sufficient to induce sleep," says Benny. A few more confidences, then, "Ta-ta, Marquis, till to-night." Revelle answers "Till to-night, Benny."

Later in the evening Mr. Mansfield, Scarsdale, and Revelle are seated in the smoking-room, enjoying cigars.

"Alec," said the banker, "it's about time I had my night-cap. Be a good fellow and mix it for me—you know my dose."

Scarsdale mixes drinks for all three.

A few minutes later, Revelle manages to drop some powder into the banker's glass.

"Well, gentlemen," presently remarks the banker, "I don't know how you feel, but I'm feeling remarkably sleepy."

Late that night a figure cycles up to "The Woodlands," and waits below the dining-room windows.

Suddenly the window is noiselessly opened. "The old man's sleeping like a log, I've got the key." The voice was Revelle's and his listener, Benny. Quietly the two men steal to the safe, unlock it, and extract the belt. Suddenly footsteps are heard descending the stairs. An instant later, and Scarsdale, fully dressed, enters the room with a candle. But a tremendous blow from Revelle knocks him senseless.

"Go, Benny, go!" Revelle urges, "ride like the devil, I'm going to raise the alarm—it's my only chance."

To put the key in Scarsdale's hand, and the remaining half of the powder in his waistcoat pocket is the work of a moment.

While Revelle is still bending over Scarsdale's prostrate body, the servants rush in, alarmed by Revelle's shouts. "One's escaped, but I've got the other," cries Seaton Revelle.

It was past four o'clock in the morning when Scarsdale was marched to the police-station, Esther alone believing him innocent, although the key and powder were found in his possession.

Next day the crime is the one topic of conversation in the district. In the "Crown and Cushion" no doubt is entertained that Scarsdale is guilty, but where is the other man?

Just then a stranger enters and the landlord eyes him suspiciously and secretly sends for the police. Two constables arrive.

But the suspicious stranger turns out to be Mr. Crump, late Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, who had come down to make a few inquiries for his personal satisfaction, prior to attending the great trial in London.

Meanwhile, a new character appears on the scene. This is police-constable Tom Jackson, once an employé at Mr. Mansfield's bank, whom Scarsdale had saved from becoming a thief in a moment of temptation. He resolves to do what little he can to redeem his debt of gratitude, so manages to visit Scarsdale in prison, and to convey short notes from Alec to Esther, protesting his innocence, and Esther's answer, swearing that nothing shall shake her love and her belief.

The great trial comes on. Mr. Mansfield and Seaton Revelle are, of course, present to give evidence. Mr. Crump is also there, a retiring figure in the gallery. Not far from him sits Benny, whose anxiety compelled him to come and listen to the evidence. Everything is against Scarsdale. Revelle never falters in his lying evidence. Subsequently the verdict is given as "Guilty," and a sentence of sixteen years penal servitude is passed.

Suddenly the prisoner turns towards a certain spot in the gallery, and pointing to a crouching figure seated there, shrieked, "There, there—that man, that man. Let him speak, let him prove my innocence!"

Almost simultaneously with his action, Crump turned his head sharply round, and discovered a terror-stricken face vainly striving to conceal its emotion. The face is Benny's.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Crump visits Miss Mansfield. He asks several questions regarding Revelle, and subsequently shows Esther a portrait, which he asks her to impress upon her mind, and should she ever meet the man whose photograph it is, to let him know at once. The picture is an excellent likeness of Benny.

Several months elapse, during which Revelle takes a large house close to the banker's home at Waring. Most of this time, Esther had spent on the Continent. It is a grey November day when the train bearing Esther and her father enters Warham station. Revelle is on the platform waiting for a friend. His friend alights, and, as he does so, Revelle catches sight of the banker and his daughter. He hastens to their side and introduces his friend as Mr. Faversham. As Esther sees the new comer, she starts back violently, but quickly regains her composure. His face was the face of the photograph.

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CHAPTER XI.
The Face of the Photograph.

With a fierce effort Esther regained her self-control; but her heart was throbbing madly. She had never doubted Crump's kindliness; but there had been moments during the past weary months when she had been unable to conquer a feeling of hopelessness, and her faith in the little man's ability had wavered. At the time he had not told her why he wished her to impress the photograph on her memory; but now something that he had evidently anticipated, had happened. She felt, somehow, that a step forward, if only a little one, had been made at last. The past inaction had been a terrible strain. She had set herself a task—to seek for proof of the innocence of the man she loved. She might be a weak woman, but a woman, strengthened by love, is not to be despised. And now, at last, something had happened!

"I hope I see you well, Miss Mansfield!" said the dapper little man whom Revelle had introduced as Mr. Faversham; then, after suffering his eyes to rest for an instant on her face he shifted them elsewhere, and looked a trifle uneasy.

"Are you staying here for any time, Mr. Faversham?" asked Esther quietly.

"Well, my old friend Revelle has been good enough to ask me to stop as long as I please."

Esther turned to Revelle.

"In that case, Mr. Revelle, I hope you will bring Mr. Faversham to call on us."

"I shall be delighted!"

Then, having introduced Mr. Faversham to Mr. Mansfield, and after an exchange of a few commonplace remarks, Revelle escorted the banker and Esther to their brougham, and afterwards embarked with his friend in an exceedingly smart dog-cart. He flung half-a-crown to the porter who had been standing at the cob's head, and who promptly touched his cap with a tremendous amount of respect.

As the cart rattled away from the station, Revelle turned to his companion with a laugh.

"Well, Benny, how are you after all this time?"

"First-rate, Marquis!"

"You'll be pleased with my little place, Benny. Nothing ostentatious, but very natty and compact. What do you think of my turn-out?"

Revelle smoothed the glossy flank of the cob with his whip.

"Smart, Marquis, very smart; but you were always given that way. It doesn't seem nearly a year since I last saw you, does it, by Jove? You've been abroad, too, haven't you?"

"Yes," answered Revelle slowly. "I say, what do you think of Miss Mansfield?"

Benjamin Beard shifted in his seat a little uneasily.

"Very charming, very nice, and all that; but I wish you hadn't introduced me. There was a look in her eyes—a sort of I-haven't-forgotten-him look—that's sticking in my throat, Marquis! Of course, I know it was either you or him; but I'm sorry, deuced sorry, for that girl!"

Revelle touched up the cob with the whip.

"She is beginning to get over it!" he said thoughtfully, "I've seen a good bit of her since I parted from you. We are quite good friends again, I assure you!"

Esther Mansfield had played her part well.

Benny glanced at him out of the corners of his eyes.

"You think you're going to succeed there?"

"I do," was the deliberate answer, "but patience and time are wanted, and in the meantime a fellow must live. That's one of the things I want to talk to you about. There's no immediate hurry; but, at the same time, I don't believe in putting things off to the last moment!"

"Quite so!" said Benny; then, after a pause, "you'll have all your work cut out for you, if you mean to win the banker's daughter. You've a wonderful way with the women, Marquis; but somehow I fancy that she hasn't forgotten him, and isn't going to forget him."

"Perhaps!" said Revelle slowly. "But I personally don't think there's anything to stop me. I——"

He stopped abruptly. The cob demanded all his attention. The animal had suddenly swerved to one side; then bolted forward at a breakneck speed. Benny held his breath, and clutched hold of the seat. But Revelle knew how to handle the ribbons, and his muscles were as strong as steel. He loved to prove his mastery over man and beast. Setting his teeth, he gathered in the reins.

"You would, you beauty, would you?"

For a few moments the cob had the best of it. Then Revelle got him in hand. Snatching up the whip, he savagely thrashed the animal till it reared and snorted with pain, and Benny wished most sincerely that he was walking instead of riding.

"That will teach you to try your little games on with me! Benny, did you see what made the brute shy?"

The pace was still considerable. Benny was all right on a bicycle; but he was out of his element now. He was clinging on for dear life. His answer came jerkily.

"A woman—just caught a glimpse of her—standing by—that stile. Here, Marquis, for mercy's sake, steady on with that whip! Do—you—want to—chuck me out—or break—my blooming neck!"

"Trust me! I'm going to read this brute a lesson!"

"Yes, exactly—but not at the expense of your—and my neck! Confound it all! I—I'd as soon be in one of your infernal—balloons!"

"All right, old chap!"

A last vicious cut with the whip, and, slackening the reins a little, Revelle sent the cob forward at a rattling but steadier pace. Benny breathed more freely. Glancing at Revelle, he noted the tightly compressed lips and the flash of his keen eyes. There was no doubt about it that the Marquis was not a man to be trifled with. In the struggle for the mastery, he had dropped the mask he usually wore, and cruelty as well as strength showed on the handsome face.

"A woman, Benny? What sort of woman?"

"I only caught a glimpse of her; she was dressed in black. If I were you, I'd sell that cob of yours, and go in for a governess cart and a pony!"

"Benny, there's a strong dash of the old woman about you. Here we are! This is my little shanty!"

The Firs was a very charming little shanty, standing some distance from the road, and nestling among trees. A groom took the trap round to the stables. A smart boy in buttons opened the door. Benny inwardly remarked that the Marquis was doing things in tip-top style, as he glanced round the small, but artistically furnished hall.

"Anyone called, Smithers," said Revelle to the buttons, "whilst I've been out?"

"Only a person, sir, who left this card, and said he would take the liberty of calling some other time!"

Smithers presented a card on a salver. Revelle glanced at it carelessly. It was inscribed thus:

"Mr. William Penworthy, Horticultural Specialist and Landscape-Gardener. Estimates Free."

Revelle flung aside the card with a gesture of impatience; then rang a bell. Railton, the silent valet with expressionless features, entered.

"Take Mr. Faversham's bag to his room, Railton!"

The valet obeyed noiselessly.

"He's worth his weight in gold, that fellow!" said Revelle, addressing his companion.

Benny said nothing, but he inwardly winced. He was beginning to feel jealous of the silent Railton, otherwise Tomlinson.

The woman who had caused Revelle's spirited cob to shy, still stood by the stile that, set back in a thick edge, remained invisible to anyone coming along the road till almost on a level with it—a woman from whose faded face a former prettiness seemed to have been washed out. She had been leaning on the stile, staring dully in front of her with a lifeless, spiritless gaze, when the trap had dashed past. She had only caught a momentary glimpse of the occupants; but for an instant her dull eyes had brightened with a look of shadowy terror.

"It was like him!" she had whispered, with a little shiver.

When, at last, she moved away from the stile, her destination was Woodlands

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The woman was Vance, one of the parlour-maids attached to John Mansfield's establishment, and it was her "afternoon out." It was her way on these occasions to wander listlessly into the country, and, reaching some gate or stile, to lean upon it, staring dully in front of her, like a woman whose soul had been crushed or numbed by some great shock, and had never properly awakened since!

When Esther and her father reached Woodlands, a heap of belated correspondence awaited them. A warm flush of excitement was still upon Esther's cheeks, and Mrs. Tilley, the kindly old housekeeper, who had welcomed her back as a mother might have welcomed a favourite daughter, had gone her way rejoicing to think that Miss Esther was looking far more like her old self than she had ever dared to hope.

John Mansfield, business man that he was, promptly turned his attention to the correspondence.

"Esther, my dear," he said, handing her a number of notes and letters that he had sorted out, "these are for you!"

Esther quickly scanned the envelopes. The flush deepened at the sight of a familiar handwriting—Crump's! She hurried away to her own room and opened the envelope there.

"Dear Miss Mansfield,—I hope you are none the worse for your journey. I am in the neighbourhood on business. If you are not too tired, could you meet me at six this evening, by the Warham reservoir. I ought to come to you, I know; but you will forgive my apparent rudeness. But don't come if you are tired, please. I will arrange a meeting for some other time.—Yours most faithfully, shall we say, William Penworthy?"

But Esther was not too tired! The shadows of dusk were deepening as she passed from the bridle-path on to the bank of the reservoir, and saw a homely little figure standing, its back turned, staring across the water.

When Crump turned at her approach, despite the dimness of the light, she was conscious of a great change in his personal appearance.

He took her hand in both his own, and wrung it warmly, his small, bright eyes beaming kindliness and sympathy.

"My dear young lady!" he said, "I *am* glad to see you again!"

And he repeated the words several times, wringing her hand all the while.

"And you're looking better, ever so much better, than when I last saw you, I am very thankful to say!"

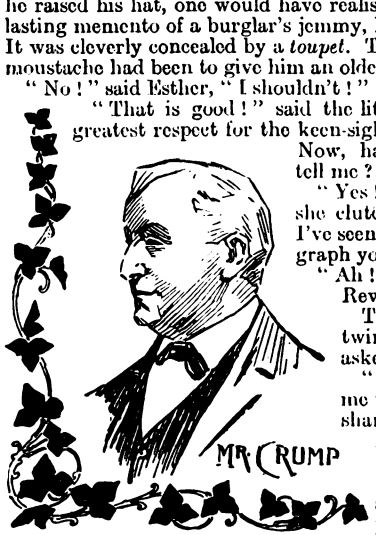
He gave a little chuckle.

"Would you have known me, if you had come upon me unexpectedly?"

When Esther had last seen him, he was clean shaved. Now he was wearing a rather scrubby beard and moustache. Had he raised his hat, one would have realised that the bald spot, lasting memento of a burglar's jemmy, had vanished entirely. It was cleverly concealed by a *toupet*. The effect of beard and moustache had been to give him an older look.

"No!" said Esther, "I shouldn't!"

"That is good!" said the little man, "I have the greatest respect for the keen-sightedness of your sex. Now, have you anything to tell me?"



"Yes!" in her excitement, she clutched his arm, "Yes, I've seen the man whose photograph you showed me!"

"Ah! With Mr. Seaton Revelle?"

The little man's eyes twinkled brightly as he asked the question.

"Yes! He introduced me to him—a Mr. Faversham. He is staying with Mr. Revelle!"

"Ah, indeed!"

Crump suppressed a feeling of pardonable pride. A certain conclusion that he had jumped at some time ago, had proved correct.

"Is there," whispered Esther, "do you think that there is more hope now?"

"My dear young lady," said the little man gently, "I must not hold out too great hopes; but, this much—it is a step in the right direction: And now, I'm going to ask you to do me a favour. Can you manage to give me some little job in connection with your garden? You will find that I shall acquit myself fairly well. It would give me opportunity to consult with you without attracting undue attention. And also you might recommend me to Mr. Revelle. He has just taken The Firs. The grounds at the back are full of promise, and I should very much like to have the task of laying them out. I oughtn't to blow my own trumpet; but I flatter myself that I am not without taste in these matters. As a young man I made a mistake in the choice of my vocation!"

And the little man firmly believed it.

"Yes!" said Esther, "I can do this. I'll speak to my father this evening about our garden!"

"Thank you very much. And now I must be going. I've got to meet a young rascal of a nephew of mine and a comrade of his. You know Tom Jackson, the young constable?"

"Yes! Indeed, yes!"

"He's a good lad, and so is my young nephew Freddie—also in the Force. You see, I'm an old fellow, Miss Mansfield, and when I was in active service I had plenty of men at my command. It's different now. I'm only a private individual. I'm taking these two lads—Freddie, bless him! I've nursed him on my knees many a time—into my confidence. They're good lads, and I can trust them. And now I must really be off. You know where to write to me. God bless you!"

Crump's way lay past The Firs.

"She's a splendid girl!" he said to himself as he was almost on a level with the drive leading to Revelle's new residence. "She's displaying real fortitude. Yes, yes! I think we have made an advance to-day!"

At that moment a man emerged from the drive, and swinging round sharply, all but collided with Crump. It was quite dark now.

"I beg your pardon!" said the man, in a low, obsequious voice, "I really beg your pardon!"

"Granted!"

The man brushed past.

"I know that voice!" muttered Crump as he went on his way; then he stopped dead.

He possessed a wonderful memory. He gave a low whistle. Freddie and Tom Jackson must wait. He turned on his heels and crept quietly after the man who had passed him.

"I may be wrong, but that voice was remarkably like that fellow Tomlinson's, who got seven years for his share in the Lancaster jewel robbery. I must make certain of this. If I'm right, then The Firs is housing a nice trio of rascals. This business is getting more and more interesting. But, if it is Tomlinson—and I don't think I'm wrong—I shall have to be very careful indeed—it's a good many years ago now; but I don't suppose he's forgotten Mr. Duffy!"

The little man chuckled noiselessly.

"Hullo! He's bound for Woodlands!"

The lamp at the entrance of the drive to the banker's house was lighted. The man whom Crump was shadowing had passed through its glare.

"I must have a good look at his face when he comes back!"

Crump waited for a moment; then quietly entered the drive, and slipped into a shrubbery close to the lamp.

Railton was the bearer of a note from Seaton Revelle to Miss Mansfield. A few moments later he returned. The lamp-light fell full upon him.

"That's Tomlinson right enough!" said Crump to himself. "We are progressing indeed!"

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CHAPTER XII.

Gentleman Jack's Story, as Told to Convict 35T.

From the cell to the parade ground, from the parade ground to the quarries; from the quarries back to the prison; in fact, the whole ghastly and monotonous routine of prison life was, slowly but insidiously, making itself felt on Alec Scarsdale. The longing to escape, the dream that his feverish brain had given birth to one weary night in the cell, had grown in intensity. He was always calculating out the possibilities—calculations that ultimately buoyed him up with hope, and plunged him into abyssmal despair. He was horribly conscious of the fact that he was deteriorating, and gradually losing his self-command. Another thought that was forcing itself upon him, and made him cling wildly to the idea of escape, was the grim fancy that he could not live through the terrible sentence imposed upon him; or, even if his body endured, his mind must give way under the strain.

The prison bell was jangling out!

Scarsdale, convict 35 T, rose from his hard bed, and had scarcely donned his clothes when the corridors outside the cells re-echoed with the tramp of warders as they hurried along, shouting out the words "Brooms in!" Mechanically he stooped down and passing his hand under the narrow opening at the bottom of the door, drew in the little cocoa-nut fibre brush known as the broom. Equally mechanically he swept out the cell.

A moment later the door was unlocked and a warder looked in.

"Now then, show your bedding" he cried coarsely, "and don't take a day and a night over it! Do you think you are the only convict in this establishment?"

Scarsdale silently held up the sheets for inspection; then, dropping them on the floor, picked up his metal wash-bowl, and stepping out into the corridor, emptied it into the metal bucket that was being borne past by two convicts.

"Will you hurry up, 35?" cried the warder.

Without a word, Scarsdale placed a tin mug, a wooden platter, and the inevitable broom outside, and then closed the cell door. Inwardly he was boiling with indignation. Every day it was the same. By abuse and petty tyranny, Assistant Warder Pettigrew seemed bent on making his life as unbearable as possible. Sometimes an almost irresistible longing had come over him to seize him by the throat, and shake the life out of him.

It is hard, perhaps, to realise, but it is a fact that a warder, without actually breaking the letter of the prison regulations, can, by petty tyranny, make a prisoner's life a hell on earth.

"The sulky brute," muttered Assistant-Warder Pettigrew, as he passed along the corridor. "One of your high-and-mighty gentleman-lags; but I'll learn him a lesson before I've done."

Reaching the next cell, the warder unlocked the door and repeated the order for bedding to be shown. Convict No. 36 T—a slim, well-built young fellow, of not more than twenty-nine, with a refined face and singularly delicate hands, not yet twisted out of shape and distorted by hard labour—was undergoing a sentence of ten years for forgery. Among the convicts he had earned himself the sobriquet of Gentleman Jack. He and Alec Scarsdale paraded side by side, and worked in the same gang. Already they had found opportunities of conversation when toiling in the quarries, and on Sundays when the prisoners are allowed to converse.

Scarsdale, as soon as Pettigrew had locked the door upon him, proceeded to neatly roll up his bedding, then placed it on an iron shelf. This done he sat down on a three-legged stool to await breakfast.

The unlocking of the door roused him from his thoughts. Assistant-Warder Pettigrew had again entered.

"Take in your breakfast!"

Then the warder glanced at the bedding. As Scarsdale took in his breakfast—an eight-ounce loaf, and some three-quarters of a pint of watery gruel in the tin mug—Pettigrew snatched the bedding from the iron shelf and scattered it on the floor.

"Now do it up properly; do you think you can do as you please? You ain't a cashier now; you're Convict No. 35 T, and the sooner you realise it the better."

The sallow skin turned red as the hot blood rushed to Scarsdale's face. There is nothing, perhaps, harder to endure than the tyranny of an inferior, and what added to the torture was the fact that Scarsdale realised that to complain was worse than useless. He would not be believed.

There was nothing to be done but to obey. With a malicious grin the warder left the cell and slammed to the door. Scarsdale ground his teeth as he again rolled up the bedding. Heaven knows he tried to be submissive enough, to endure silently, not because he was of a submissive nature, or one of those tame, invertebrate creatures who are incapable of resistance, but because it was the only way to qualify for a remission of the terrible term of imprisonment imposed upon him. (A prisoner obtaining the full number of good conduct marks is entitled to a remission, amounting to about one-fourth of the term of sentence.) For hope was not yet crushed out of him, and greater than hope was a growing longing for revenge, that prison misery only added to and fostered. He prayed that he might live through it all, to stand face to face with the man who had wronged him.

The bedding rolled up, Scarsdale had barely swallowed the wretched breakfast when the prison bell rang out for chapel. Again the warders hurried along the corridors, unlocking the doors, and the convicts, as the command to take one step forward and march rang out, stepped out of their cells, and filed along the corridors down iron staircases into the hall below, and from there into the chapel, where a short service was read. At the conclusion of the service the convicts, closely guarded by the officers, were marched in double file, into the parade ground—a barrack-like square, surrounded partly by prison buildings and partly by a massive wall, its summit bristling with iron spikes. Orders were hoarsely shouted out, and the convicts in dogged silence formed up into a number of working parties.

It was a grim sight—those silent lines of strangely-assorted humanity. Young fellows scarcely out of their teens, broken-down grey-haired old men, hardened gaol-birds and men of intellect and refinement stood side by side, and on nearly every face the weary, indescribable prison-look.

The working party—so called by the prison officials; convict gang by the prisoners—to which Scarsdale was attached, was composed of some thirty men. The man on his right was a respited murderer, with coarse features and a narrow receding forehead. He was a desperate character, and was dressed in "canaries"—the yellow convict dress worn by prisoners who have attempted to escape. Sid Baxter was not a pleasant neighbour.

Gentleman Jack was on Scarsdale's right.

It was only after every man had been searched from head to foot that the prison gates were unlocked, and the different parties, in close double-file, marched out. Each party was headed by "the rifleman"—an officer armed with loaded rifle, bayonet, and cutlass—while the officer-in-charge and an assistant-warder, armed with revolvers and cutlasses, brought up the rear.

Outside stretched a bleak, open country, part moor, part swamp, with here and there portions of reclaimed and rudely-cultivated land. In the distance, where the soil was rocky, were the convict quarries. Rising up at regular intervals, and standing out clearly against the leaden sky, were the look-out and signal stations, forming a complete cordon round the convict settlement.

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Outside the prison gates, resting on rails of a narrow gauge stood a convict train, the steam hissing from the small locomotive that was ready to drag a load of convicts some three miles, to where the fortress-building was being carried out. The small, open carriages—cages on wheels—were fitted with sliding gates of iron bars, chains passing along the exterior of these gates, and padlocked at each end of the carriage. At the end of each carriage was a platform, not unlike that of a Pullman car, for the warder.

The working party to which Scarsdale was attached did not enter the train, but tramped along a rough, uneven, convict-made road towards the home quarries. The man in the "canaries" marched next to Scarsdale.

It was that afternoon, while working away in the quarry, that Gentleman Jack told Scarsdale the story of how he had been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. He had already served over two years, and had attained the rank of a second-class prisoner, as the yellow facings to his jacket, and the yellow badge with the registered number printed in black, signified. Convicts of the second and first-class are known as "tea-men," from the fact that they are allowed tea instead of gruel.

"Yes," said Gentleman Jack, with a glance at his hands, still delicate, and retaining their shape in spite of oakum-picking and quarrying and scrubbing of stone floors, "my hands got me into trouble. I wish to Heaven I could say that I was innocent, but I can't. But there was someone else more guilty than myself—someone who drove me to it. I'm not trying to excuse myself. If I had been stronger I should have resisted the temptation, and faced the trouble that I was in, like a man. But it's too late to be sorry now. And when I get out of this odius place, I suppose I shall have to fall back on my hands again. What chance"—he was speaking bitterly now—"has a 'lag' of making a fresh start, of trying to redeem the past?"

Scarsdale, glancing at his refined face, saw that it was working with emotion. The man's conscience had not yet been deadened by vile associates; there was yet a longing to make atonement. But would it still be so when his weary term of penal servitude was over? Or would he leave prison hardened and desperate—a modern Ishmael, his hand against everyone, everyone's hand against him?

"Don't speak like that," said Scarsdale, in a low voice, though inwardly he felt that the man was but echoing his own sentiments, "it's never too late to mend!"

The conversation was temporarily interrupted by the approach of the warder.

"Now, then, 35 and 36, do a bit of work for a change. This ain't the place for chin-music. Let me catch you at it again, and I'll have one of you shifted to another working party, and precious sharp!"

When he had moved away again, Gentleman Jack lowered his eye-lid at Scarsdale.

"His bark's worse than his bite," he said, speaking with motionless lips, "not like Pettigrew. He's not bad-hearted."

"You were going to tell me," said Scarsdale, "how you came to be here."

"Yes, I don't as a rule care to talk about it. But you—well, you are different from most here.

"It was the old story of cards," said Gentleman Jack, "playing for high stakes, losing, playing again in hopes of winning back what I had lost, losing again, and then getting desperate. To this day I believe the man—curse him—who induced me to play, tampered with the cards, or else he had the devil's luck. Oh, yes, he was a gentleman, and moved in high Society and all that, but it didn't prevent him being one of the biggest scoundrels alive. When I was head over ears in debt to him, he pressed me for money. I asked for time, and he only threatened to show me up. I was engaged to be married, and my father was dead against gambling and that sort of thing. Then my evil genius, half-jestingly, suggested that I should give him a cheque for the amount. I

"That—that man is my husband!"

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told him I was overdrawn at the bank. He plied me with drink—I had always been clever at imitating handwriting—and when I left him, he'd got a cheque for the amount with another man's name upon it. He swore he wouldn't present it for payment within the next three months. It was cashed the next day. Two days later I was arrested for forgery."

Gentleman Jack paused to wipe the perspiration from his forehead.

"I don't want to excuse myself, but if that man hadn't egged me on, driven me to it, I should have been a free man to-day!"

Scarsdale looked at him with a deep expression of compassion on his face.

"What was the scoundrel's name?"

Gentleman Jack rested his pick on the ground and leant on it.

"He's fairly well known in London," he said, hoarsely, "though few realise what his character is—he's too clever for that. His name's Seaton Revelle!

"Why, what's up? What's the matter?" cried Gentleman Jack, forgetting his surroundings for the moment, and staring in blank amazement at Scarsdale, who had let his pick fall to the ground with a crash, and whose face had undergone a sudden and indescribable change. Scarsdale did not speak, as if the mention of that man's name had numbed his faculties. But his brain was working fiercely, like that of a cataleptic, who, outwardly, presents all the appearances of death, yet inwardly lives and feels. What irony of Fate, what strange coincidence had brought it about that here, in the prison quarry, he should find himself side by side with another victim—for his reason told him that Gentleman Jack had been driven to err—of the man to whom all his misery was owing?

"Here," whispered Gentleman Jack, "lay hold of your pick. The screw's coming our way again."

When the warder passed, Scarsdale was hewing away mechanically. The man, glancing at him casually, did not notice the ghastly, strained expression on his face.

"What was it upset you?" whispered Gentleman Jack, when the warder had passed out of hearing. "Why, man, you went the colour of death!"

"Seaton Revelle," said Scarsdale, the words coming slowly from between his clenched teeth, "you say he tempted you to forgery. Seaton Revelle—oh, God, if I could only once meet him face to face!"

And his soiled hands tightened on the haft of the pick with a feverish grip.

"What, you know him!"

"Know him"—Scarsdale gave vent to a low laugh, a mirthless laugh almost horrible to hear—"but for him I should not be here. He worked out my ruin; he tore me away from the girl I loved; he degraded me in the eyes of the world; he swore away my liberty!"

The pent-up stream had burst its dam. He had given tongue to what in the loneliness of his cell, to what in the rock-bound quarry, had never ceased from haunting and torturing him. Till then he had never spoken to a soul of his past.

"What," hoarsely whispered Gentleman Jack, as his eyes dilated, "did he bring you to this?"

"Yes!"

CHAPTER XIII.

"That Man is My Husband!"

"Good afternoon, Miss Mansfield!"

Seaton Revelle had strolled up from The Firs to Woodlands. Benny had preferred not to accompany him, explaining that he felt uncomfortable, somehow, in Miss Mansfield's presence.

Esther, hatless, her hair touzled by the wind, was standing at the gates of the carriage drive with a little grey-headed, grey-bearded man, who was in the act of jotting something down in a note-book. He had not even looked up as Revelle approached, so interested did he seem in what he was writing.

Esther shook hands with Revelle. She could do so now without flinching.

"I'm very busy," she said, with a little laugh, "my father's given me his permission, and I'm going to have the whole of the front garden altered."

The little man looked up from his note-book, and pointed to a spot with his pencil.

"Rhododendrons we decided upon there, miss, didn't we?"

"Yes, Mr. Penworthy!"

The little man solemnly made a note.

"Mr. Penworthy," went on Esther, addressing Revelle, "is carrying out my ideas for me."

The little man looked up again, and raised his hat to Revelle.

"Yes, sir! I took the liberty of leaving my card on you the other day. If you should have anything in my line that you wanted doing, I should be very grateful if you would give me a trial. I feel confident that my work would give satisfaction. You've a very nice piece of ground at the back of The Firs, sir."

"I must think it over," answered Revelle.

"Thank you, sir. In case you should have mislaid my card, will you allow me?"

The little man had produced a card from his note-book.

"You will notice that 'Estimates are free.' Thank you, sir!"

Revelle accepted the card; then turned to Esther.

"Miss Mansfield, I've come to apologise at the last moment for my friend, Mr. Faversham. Your father was good enough to suggest that I should bring him to dinner to-night. He's altogether off colour to-day. I'm afraid it looks like influenza!"

Benny, at that particular moment, was looking most hale, and enjoying a cigar and whisky and soda.

"Most certainly. I am very sorry to hear that!"

"Good girl!" said Mr. Penworthy to himself as he studied his note-book, "brave girl. The manner in which she veils that broken heart of hers is admirable! And there are those who say women have no pluck!"

* * * * *

"Esther, my dear, would you, as a special favour, let us smoke our cigars in here to-night!"

Mansfield and Revelle, both in evening dress, had entered the drawing-room, to which Esther had retired after dinner. She had not heard the door open. At the sound of her father's voice she looked up with a start. There was a look of pain in her eyes. But a moment later she was smiling.

"You know you can, father!" she said. "You will have your coffee in here, too!"

"Revelle, I've a special brand of cigars that I want you to try, if you'll excuse me whilst I fetch them!"

The banker left the room.

Esther rose and rang the bell. Revelle sauntered up to a picture on the wall—a portrait of Esther as a child.

"This is very charming!" he said.

The door opened. Vance, the parlour-maid, stood, lifeless-eyed, on the threshold. Revelle's back was turned to her. She had not waited at table that night.

"Bring the coffee in here, please, Vance!"

"Yes, miss!"

The woman retired. Revelle turned.

"Miss Mansfield," he said, waiting till Esther was seated again, and then sitting down beside her, "I'm awfully glad you and your father are coming to my house-warming. I'm going to ask you to do me a great favour. I'm—er—a lonely old bachelor, would you honour me—I should be awfully obliged—by your acting as hostess?"

"I shall be very pleased!"

"Thank you awfully! It'll be quite an informal affair. It's exceedingly charitable of you to take pity on a forlorn old bachelor!"

The door opened. Vance, carrying a tray, entered.

"You might put it on the table, Vance!" said Esther.

Seaton Revelle saw the woman's face for the first time now. He was too late! Before he could swing round so as to hide his own face from her, the woman raised her spiritless eyes. They rested on his face, dilated.

Then there was a crash. The tray had fallen from her hands She was pointing at him.

"That—that man is my husband!"

(To be continued.)

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Marmalade and Love.

How Barstow Brown and Elviry Richards Came Together.

The last scarlet bar of the gorgeous autumn sunset was fading out behind the tall poplars along the country road when Barstow Brown's creaking old farm waggon turned the corner which led to his lonely and ill-kept home.

"There's the light burnin' already in Miss Elviry Richards' window," he commented. "It does git dark awful early nights now. Seems like hers is the cleanest kep' an the cheerfulest lamp in the whole village."

And indeed it did seem to illuminate with its friendly radiance the little one-story house by the roadside. It looked like a beacon—a star. It made Farmer Brown think in admiring but unformulated fashion of a steadfast love—pure, unwavering, brilliant. It attracted him. It drew him—the worn and harassed body and soul of him. Unconsciously he tightened the reins. But it was not until the plodding horses stood still in response, that he wondered whether he might venture in and what excuse he could give for his visit. Suddenly he lifted his head and sniffed—once, twice. Then he hurriedly twisted the reins around the whipstock and clambered down from the high seat. Swiftly, noiselessly, excuse and encouragement had come to him—in the guise of an odour at that.

"Marmalade! If she ain't a-makin' marmalade!" He was hurrying up the short path to the front door, at which he knocked. "I'll tell her I want the recipe for Susie Reilly to make some by. That's the ticket! Oh, Mis' Richards! I was just goin' home from the mill, when the nicest smell came floatin' down the road! Seemed 's if I was back in mother's again, an' she was puttin' up marmalade." He sighed, and moistened his lips at the recollection. "So I thought I'd come in an' find how you make it. Maybe Susie Reilly could make a pound or so!"

Forty placid and benignant summers had passed over the brown head of Elviry Richards, but where was the girl in her county who carried herself with more grace and dignity, and what matron could boast such a fresh complexion and bright eyes as she?

"To be sure!" she cried heartily. "Come in, Mr. Brown." She drew forward the best rocking chair, and he seated himself.

"'Tisn't much I need make, living alone as I do, but a good storeroom is a fine thing to fall back on. You'd need a lot in your house, I'm thinkin'. I'll give you the recipe with pleasure, an' a jar to take home for Susie to taste. How does she get on, Mr. Brown?"

Barstow Brown looked round the bright little room, at the shining glass lamp with the brightly-burning wick, which stood behind the row of freshly potted geranium slips in the recessed window, then back at the plump, white-aproned figure opposite.

"Not too well, Mis' Richards. She's kind of shiftless. It comes natural to some folks to be shiftless. Seems like the work allus keeps a bit ahead of her. Seems like she can't catch up with it. But she means well. Most shiftless folks means well. I got to be movin'." He rose reluctantly. "The young ones, they'll be a-missin' me."

"What now, an' you couldn't wait till I make you a cup of coffee? No? That's too bad. Wait till I get you the marmalade, anyhow. What's that? Could you come out to the kitchen while I'm a-gettin' it? Why, of course, Mr. Brown?"

Twittering and stepping briskly, Miss Elviry tripped ahead, and Barstow Brown plodded after. He was aghast at his own temerity, but the appetising smell of the marmalade drew him to the kitchen as the white brilliance of the lamp had drawn him to the parlour.

"My!" He breathed and stopped short. "This beats——" He was looking round the gayest, cosiest, most immaculate little kitchen he had ever beheld. From the black mirror of a stove, with its golden grin through the open draught, to the shining plates on the dresser, the row of orange filled glass jars on the table, the dish-pan that glittered like silver and the cat asleep on the braided mat, all things bespoke industry, energy, comfort.

Something in his attitude of timidity, in his look of wonder that was almost one of awe, in his neglected personal appearance, went straight to the woman's warm heart of Miss Elviry Richards. He had been such a spruce, good-looking fellow fifteen years ago! Her glance, which was keen if kindly, noted all things—the shirt, with the band all gone; the coat, with holes at the elbows; more than all, the hollows at his temples and in his cheeks. These—and the weak tears that came into his eyes! She busied herself writing out the recipe—and talking.

"It isn't any too easy, I expect, with only Susie. She never was a hand to look after children, an' there's three at your place. I expect it ain't been like home since—since Cyrilla went away."

Barstow Brown was silent. It had not been a happy home before Cyrilla died. But he could not tell Miss Richards that. No, nor anyone else. Only he had meant—had honourably meant—to ask Elviry to marry him before the pretty, painted, flippant little city girl had come down to the country town and taken his fickle heart captive.

"Here's the recipe, an' here's the jar. Yes, you must take the big one, an'—why—Barstow!"

For there was a look in his eyes she had not seen since those happy days before Cyrilla aired her city graces on the village.

"I'm probably a failure, Elviry," said Barstow Brown. "I don't know, but you'll turn me out when you hear what I've been wantin' to say ever since it would be right an' proper to talk that way. But the farm's a good one, an' the house could be made the best hereabouts if 'twas fixed up right, an' the children——"

"They're dear children!" declared Miss Elviry, and she meant it.

"Well, they like you awful well. You allus was a one to get round youngsters. I—I"—he dropped his eyes—"I think you know what I mean, Elviry—what I want!"

"Of course I do!" she cried cordially. "You want the recipe and the marmalade."

"No, Elviry! You know I want—you!"

"Well, you've got to take them if you take me!" Her tone was delightfully coquettish. "I have one in each hand!"

He stared at her, eager, half incredulous. "Do you mean it—really? There's been others——"

"There's been others," Miss Elviry agreed complacently, "but—I haven't took any of 'em—have I? There—now, Barstow Brown! Do behave! I daresay I might get ready in three weeks, but—your horse will be about cramped with waitin'. Oh, Barstow, I didn't think 'twas in you to act so dreadfully silly! Do take care! Let me set down this jar of marmalade, anyway! There—now—go! It'll be nine o'clock when you get home—Barstow Brown!"

Reed Thomas.

The great Card Scene in **"The Confessions of Cynthia"** forms the subject of our next week's cover.

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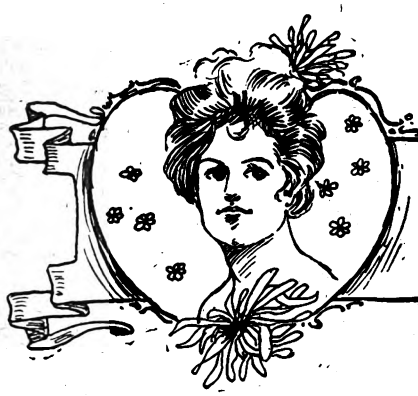

THE GREAT NAG-A-POR DIAMOND.

A Humorous Story of an Attempted Robbery.

"Scotland Yard,
May 15th, 1898.

"My dear Colonel—

Just a line to warn you that we have had private information of an impending visit to your neighbourhood by a particularly smart thief; probably attracted by the name of the great diamond. We don't know how the man will make the attempt; he may take the next house to your own and cultivate your acquaintance, or he may simply adopt the old-fashioned burglar's style of a visit by night; but the diamond is worth, I suppose, about £10,000, and the thief will not stand at a trifle. Shall I send you down a plain-clothes man for a week or two, or do you prefer to tackle the job yourself? We have not anything definite against the fellow, and wish to catch him red-handed if possible.—Yours faithfully,

"GEO. SUTCLIFFE."

Colonel Lambert's reply was brief, but decisive.

"Dear George," he wrote, "if I cannot capture this miserable scoundrel unaided, he is welcome to the Nag-a-por. Best wishes—glad to see you any time.

"W. J. L."

When he had written this characteristic note, he lighted a cigar and strolled into the garden to consider his plan of campaign.

It happened that his next door neighbour, who had only moved in a few days previously, was at that moment lounging upon a garden seat, smoking a short briar pipe.

"He may take the next house to your own," remembered the Colonel; "which suggests a possibility; and he's smoking a pipe out of doors, which makes it into a moral certainty."

If the gallant officer had felt any leaning towards mercy, this last atrocity banished it. In his opinion, a man, purporting to be a gentleman, who smoked out of doors, was little better than a deserter; the last-named being his outside limit of vice.

However, he made up his mind to get on speaking terms with the enemy. So he walked slowly along the garden-path, pacing from one end to the other, gazing straight before him, and occasionally uttering a hoarse, tentative sort of cough. His brilliant strategy was speedily successful.

"Good-morning, sir," said the man with the pipe, nodding across the quickset hedge.

"Br-r-r Jove!" muttered the Colonel, who was trembling all over, "I knew he would!" Then to his neighbour: "H'm—ha—of course—good morning!" he stammered, his face red with suppressed excitement. "I suppose you want—I mean you're after—that is—good-morning! Come across and have a dia—have a cigar with me."

"With pleasure, sir," was the ready reply of the stranger, who seemed rather puzzled by the strange embarrassment of the Colonel.

"Yes, you just come here," thought the latter, smiling grimly, "and if I don't plant a shell in your batteries in something less than five minutes, my name isn't Lambert."

For a moment, indeed, the simple-hearted old soldier hesitated. Was it fair that he, whom he knew to be one of the most skilful strategists of modern times, should set his strength against the pitiful cunning of a common thief? He hesitated, almost decided on mercy—and then he saw the briar pipe coming briskly up his garden walk. At the same moment he remembered the letter from Scotland Yard. There are some things a man—particularly a peppery old soldier—cannot forgive.

The two men sat down side by side. After a few careless remarks about the weather, made to throw the enemy off his guard, the Colonel negotiated a slight skirmish on the diamond question, turning the conversation to that subject with what he thought a decidedly smart flank movement.

"You're right, sir," he said. "The rain has—remarkably fine effects—glistens on the—the grass like—br-r-mph—*diamonds*!" gasping out the last word in purple-faced excitement.

"Yes," replied the stranger calmly; "extremely pretty."

"Like—br-r-mph—*diamonds!*" gasped the Colonel again.

"But far more beautiful," said the stranger, sucking obstinately at the unspeakable briar.

The Colonel crossed one leg very deliberately over the other, came back to his former position still more deliberately, and then suddenly gripped his knees round an imaginary saddle and flung himself headlong against the enemy.

"Talking of diamonds," he said, tugging his moustache fiercely, "you may have heard that I possess—er—rather—er—famous stone—the Great Nag-a-por?"

"A great comfort to you, no doubt!" was the quiet reply. As a matter of fact, the stranger appeared to be already quite tired of the subject.

But the Colonel struggled on with his conversational mines and masked batteries, to his own entire satisfaction, and all the time he affected an open-hearted simplicity, which he felt very foreign to his real nature. He began to feel a contempt for his adversary, which is never advisable. The ease with which he acquired his strategical victories made him reckless, so that presently he invited his new acquaintance indoors to see the famous diamond.

This invitation, which was readily accepted, was the first of many; in fact, quite a strong friendship, sincere on both sides to a certain extent, sprang up between the two men. Henderson proved to be a most companionable fellow, and, what was better than all, a willing listener, with a distinct partiality for Service anecdotes.

But although the Colonel was highly gratified with his new neighbour, he did not forget the purpose which had led him to form the acquaintance, nor did he forget that for a soldier to extend his acquaintance to a common civilian is a very great honour for the latter.

He continued to keep his diamond in his bedroom although, as he somewhat recklessly told the stranger, he had been warned that some scoundrels were trying to steal it. They were welcome to their trouble, he added, and it was all they would get, except probably a smart sentence when they were captured.

Of course these remarks were all bluff. As a matter of fact, the Colonel watched his man with unceasing vigilance. If Henderson came out for a stroll in the garden, the old soldier was sure to be standing at his house-door a few seconds later, apparently absorbed in the deepest thought.

When the enemy went for his evening constitutional, which generally happened about nine o'clock, the Colonel

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would follow him at a distance of about thirty yards, skipping lightly from the shelter of a gate to a tree, and thence with a sudden swoop, down-headed, to the next piece of cover. Anybody who might be sufficiently interested to follow him—and he was followed nearly every night—must have been highly edified. But the old soldier's eyes were both in the front of his head and fully occupied.

We have said that the Colonel was followed every night, at the same time that he was following Henderson, and the remark needs a little explanation. A few days after the letter arrived from Scotland Yard, the Colonel, whose gardener and general factotum had recently left him, was visited by a smart, soldierly-looking man, who produced a testimonial from a high, military personage, which satisfied the Colonel in an instant. The man applied for the vacant situation, and was accepted.

He gave complete satisfaction. He had served in the ranks, he was smart in his appearance, he knew his business. But there were two curious circumstances about the man. The first was that he tracked the Colonel on all his nightly rambles. Perhaps he had a feeling in his mind that his master might quarrel with Mr. Henderson and he wished to be ready to render whatever assistance might be necessary.

The second circumstance was the antipathy to him manifested on at least one occasion by Mr. Henderson. Jones was mowing the lawn, when the former opened the French windows of his drawing-room and stepped quietly out for a stroll. The next moment he saw Jones and stepped back as though in intense surprise. His eyes dilated in fear and amazement, and then in an instant he turned and walked hurriedly back into his house.

In order to watch the enemy the Colonel had arranged to take his meals in the drawing-room, close to a window which commanded a view of the front garden-gate. By this means he practically surrounded the house, for the only outlet from the back garden was by a path leading to the front.

Frequently the gallant officer would jump up suddenly in the midst of a meal, to the great astonishment of his wife, as admirable in her way as her husband, and possessed of a simple, unquestioning faith in the latter.

"Br-r-mph!" the old soldier would gasp, and well for him if his food didn't go "wrong way" in the excitement of the moment. "Br-r-mph! There he goes! I'm off! Don't wait."

Then he would rush from the room, cannoning furiously against everything, upsetting chairs, breaking ornaments, his legs or arms going like a windmill. He would stumble blindly over the doormat, fling open the front door and—the next moment he would be standing on the doorstep gazing placidly at the sky, absolutely wrapped and buttoned up in the deepest thought.

Of course these wild sallies were not without a certain element of risk. On one occasion, the front door happened to be open, and the postman was standing on the top step awaiting a receipt for a registered letter. The Colonel caught his foot against the mat—his invariable custom—stumbled forward, with his head half a yard in advance of his body, and butted the poor postman neatly just in the centre.

At the same moment the door of the adjoining house was opened and Henderson appeared. The two men who had just met each other were rolling head over heels down the steps together.

"Good gracious, Colonel!" cried Henderson, "whatever has happened? Have you—have you had a fall?"

But the old soldier had "Br-r-mphed!" and "Confounded!" so energetically all the time his head and legs were bumping down the stone steps, that he was by this time breathless and gasping; otherwise he would certainly have said something crushing to Henderson in return for his foolish question. For any man—even a civilian—should have known better than to ask a man if he has had a fall, just after he has seen him roll down five stone steps and halfway down a gravel path.

"I didn't expect to see you so suddenly, Colonel," continued the offender, "although I did wish to meet you. Nothing special—merely to tell you I am going away to-night for a couple of days."

The Colonel could scarcely repress a start of astonishment.

"Yes, yes—very good of you!" he stammered, "er—postman, very sorry—little amends—don't mention—I beg—Br-r-mph. Strange coincidence, Mr. Henderson—going away myself—two days—must pack up. Good evening, sir."

The gardener was trimming the edge close to where the two men were standing. He turned his head slowly as his master passed along the path.

"Old fool!" he muttered, and glanced reflectively towards the window of the Colonel's bedroom.

Mr. Henderson heard the words, and saw the look that accompanied them. He glanced across the hedge with a curious mixture of fear and threatening—stepped forward as if to speak, and then turned on his heel and strode away.

"Another fool!" muttered the gardener laconically.

About an hour later, Mr. Henderson left his house carrying a hand-bag. He walked briskly towards the station, and presently disappeared in the gathering twilight. Before the sound of his footsteps ceased to echo along the newly-paved road, the Colonel was after him, and the gardener stepping from some dark corner, followed stealthily after his master.

The first man reached the station and entered. The Colonel, turning suddenly, discovered he was being followed. He ran straight towards Jones, who was too much taken by surprise to retreat.

"You, sir—you, sir," spluttered the fiery old soldier. "What do you mean—following people—what—Jones!"

"Yes, sir, it's me!" said the gardener quietly. "Just taking a stroll, no offence I hope, sir."

"Quite right—quite right, Jones, didn't know it was you."

As a matter of fact, the Colonel was struggling with a new idea. Gardener, indeed! The man was a detective. The Colonel remembered the letter from Scotland Yard, and their desire to catch the thief in the act.

"Look here," he said gruffly. "Do you know where Scotland Yard is? Don't let your jaw drop like that—it's a waste of time—I know all about you."

"Yes, sir, the testimonial was very—very full."

"Very rubbish!" growled the Colonel. "Do you deny that the Scotland Yard people have sent you here to keep an eye on my Nag-a-por, and to catch the would-be thief, if possible?

"Anyhow, you may as well stay, now you're here," he added. "When you return, tell Mrs. Lambert I shall not be home for a couple of days, I forgot to mention it—and don't let anything go wrong while I'm away."

"Yes, sir. Sorry I deceived you, sir, but I had my instructions."

"The man who obeys orders, never goes wrong." And the Colonel strode away towards the station. The train had just left, and the booking clerk was standing at the door of his little office.

"Mr. Henderson gone by this train?" said the Colonel. "Tall, fair-haired man, Flixton Road."

"Oh! yes, sir, know him quite well," was the reply. "He's on the train that's just gone out."

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"Br-r-mph! I'm too late then."

"But he only booked to Davyhulme, sir."

The Colonel did not forget to thank the man, for with all his gruffness, the old soldier was exquisitely courteous to high and low.

Davyhulme was a little village about three miles away. It only contained about two hundred inhabitants, and those were nearly all the poorest class. Yet Mr. Henderson had stated deliberately that he should be away two days!

Events appeared to be ripening all round. When the Colonel left the station, his eyes were deeply intrenched beneath overhanging brows, his head erect, his shoulders squared. The old soldier was about to take the field.

When he reached the high road, he glanced keenly down the long array of lighted lamps. A man was walking slowly away from the station. His footsteps were audible, and when he presently passed beneath a lamp, his figure was plainly distinguishable. He disappeared again in an instant, swallowed up by gloomy shadows.

The Colonel took a cigar from his case. "That man was Jones," he ruminated, "going back to the house. Henderson is at Davyhulme, and will be shortly on his way to the same place as Jones." He struck a match, lighted his cigar, and then glanced at his watch. "Early enough yet," he muttered. "I'll finish the cigar, and then it will be time enough to take up my position."

He closed his watch-case with a snap, threw the match away, and strode briskly down the road, away from his own house.

* * * * * *

At one o'clock the next morning the Colonel's house looked peaceful and innocent enough for anything. The night had lightened considerably since the early evening, owing to the belated appearance of the moon. The house, jerry-built villa though it was, looked like a palace rising from a ground-work of enchanted light and shadow. Even the neglected summer-house, touched by the moonbeams, nestled like a queen Titania's palace at the end of the garden. One might enter in full hope of finding there a gallant troop of fairies, disporting themselves bravely amid the dust and the gloom.

But assuredly anyone who might enter the summer-house with such a hope, would be doomed to disappointment. For instead of Oberon and Titania and their little attendants, there was only one grim looking man, who sat amid the shadows with a loaded revolver on the ledge before him, and watched the silent windows of his own house.

Shortly after one o'clock the Colonel became aware that he was not the only man on guard. Someone suddenly appeared in the next garden, vaulted lightly over the intercepting hedge, and crouched in an instant behind some bushes, about half-way along the garden. This man was Henderson, and to say the Colonel was surprised, is to state the case very mildly indeed.

But the latter had no time for surprise, for events began to hurry to a conclusion. Possibly it was well, for Henderson might otherwise have been tempted to rush for the shelter of the summer-house.

The light of a match suddenly flared up at one of the windows. The Colonel recognised his own bedroom, where the Nag-a-por was kept. Presently the gas was lighted but turned down to a mere glimmer at once. Then silence and stagnation for nearly half-an-hour. At the end of that time the light in the bedroom disappeared. The man who had presumably the diamond in his possession, stood at the window for a moment ere he passed from the room. It was Jones!

The Colonel became more and more bewildered. Who was this mysterious man? Gardener, detective, or thief? And in what relation did he stand towards Henderson?

The old soldier shrugged his shoulders and took up his revolver from the ledge; next moment the house door was opened, and Jones appeared at the threshold. He came lightly down the stone steps, and running along the garden path blundered straight into the arms of Henderson who sprang suddenly from behind the bushes.

Jones immediately put a hand to his breast pocket in a way that told its own tale.

The two men stood in the centre of a broad patch of moonlight. The Colonel fingered his revolver irresolutely, puzzled by this last development. Anyhow, he had both the men at his mercy, and could afford to wait for a few minutes longer.

"Give me that diamond," said Henderson fiercely.

"Haven't got a diamond."

"When thieves fall out," murmured the Colonel softly.

"You're telling lies," growled Henderson, and dealt the other man a buffet that flung him on his back in an instant.

Then he sprang after his fallen antagonist, stooped and pulled his closely-buttoned coat asunder. Next moment he stood erect holding in his hand something that glittered in the moonlight. The Colonel quietly opened the door of the summer-house.

"You give that back," said Jones sulkily, as he rose to his feet. "It isn't yours. I'll go halves if you like."

The Colonel took a step forward.

"I shall return this to its owner," said Henderson sternly; and the Colonel stepped back to the summer-house. "As for you, I ought to march you to the nearest police-station."

"You daren't do that."

"No, perhaps not," replied Henderson sadly. "I've too much regard for our good name. And the shock would probably kill my father. But I'll tell you what I'll do, Tom. If you'll go to Australia and promise to play the straight game there, I'll pay your passage out and bank something for you to start with. And I'll return this in the morning to the Colonel, and beg him not to make any trouble about it. He's a bit pompous and stilted, but I think he's a gentleman. Come into my house till the morning and we'll talk matters over."

The two men walked to the gate and turning into the next garden entered the house. The Colonel, who was certainly not a sentimentalist, discerned an expression on his gardener's face that pleased him hugely.

"Scotland Yard will never have another chance of catching that man," he muttered. "Br-r-mph! I'll invite Henderson to dinner to-morrow—he's a gentleman—and he can bring his briar pipe with him."

But as for the diamond, the Colonel appeared to have forgotten its very existence.

Frank Wall.

A WORD IN YOUR EAR!

Has it ever struck you, while walking along a West-end street, that the fashionably-dressed, dainty occupants of the handsomely appointed carriages and pairs which swiftly pass you, may possibly be as deeply steeped in crime as the ragged, coarse foot-pad who snatches at your watch or your hand-bag? Perhaps it hasn't; but it is, nevertheless, true. And if you read our new series of stories entitled "The Confessions of Cynthia" (which commence next week), your eyes will probably be opened to many strange things which take place under the cloak of quality. Cynthia was a lady's companion, and she has some truly remarkable stories to tell

Eighteen and Eighty.

OLD LADY: "There is one thing I notice particularly about that young man who calls to see you. He seems to have an inborn, instinctive respect for woman, as though she were a being from a higher sphere, to be approached with the utmost delicacy and deference." Granddaughter (sweet eighteen): "Yes, he's horribly bashful."

He Got One.

MABEL (relenting a little, but still a little angry): "Anything I have of yours I will return at once." Charlie (giving her a kiss): "Well, there's your opportunity."

Very Unkind.

MAUD: "Now, when I am asked to sing, I never say, 'Oh, I can't,' but I always sit down at the piano and——" Mamie: "And let the audience find it out for themselves. Yes."

Very Chaste.

"I AM so pleased," said young Mrs. Warble to her husband, "that you succeeded at last in matching that pattern! Don't you think the design is wonderfully chaste?" "I should say so," replied Warble; "I ran all over the town after it."

It Wasn't Etiquette.

MRS HENDRICKS (the landlady): "Can I send you some more soup, Mr. Dumley?" Mr. Dumley: "No, thanks." Mrs. Hendricks (engagingly): "Don't refuse, Mr. Dumley, because it isn't considered good form to be helped twice to soup." Mr. Dumley: "Oh, etiquette has nothing to do with it, madam; it's the soup."

Why He Wept.

KINDLY NEIGHBOUR: "How is the baby this morning, Johnnie?" "He's worse, ma'am. The doctor says he can't live the week out. Boo-hoo-hoo!" "My dear boy, I sincerely hope the baby will get well." "So do I. It 'ud be awful hard on me for him to die this week, 'cause Saturday's th' day of th' circus."

Fully Explained.

A MOTHER, indignant to find her little daughter very low in her class at school, exclaimed wrathfully: "I am out of all patience with you, Mollie. I should just like to know why Sally Jones is always at the head of her class, while you are always at the foot?" Mollie hesitated for a moment, and then, looking her mother squarely in the face, she said, demurely: "You seem to forget, mamma, that Sally has very clever parents."

A Genuine Antique.

MRS. SUBURB: "Is this the house you've been talking about? I don't like it at all." Agent: "It's the latest Queen Anne style, mum." Mrs. Suburb: "I don't like it. The kitchen opens right into the parlour, or nearly so." Agent: "Yes, mum, Queen Anne was a famous cook, mum. She named that fine old apple pudding 'Brown Betty,' after Queen Elizabeth, mum. Queen Elizabeth was noted for doing things up brown, you know, mum." Mrs. Suburb: "And, dear me, the cellar is half full of water." Agent: "Yes, mum. In those old days people always kept water on hand, to use in time of a siege, you know, mum."

The Worm Will Turn.

"YOU were always a fault-finder," growled the wife. "Yes, dear," responded the husband meekly; "I found you."

Her Preference.

"COME," observed the brisk young stock-broker to his very best girl. "You shall choose your own present." And then she observed artlessly: "Are—.. —engagement rings very expensive?"

Adam and Eve.

WILLIE (who has eaten his apple): "Mabel, let's play Adam and Eve. You be Eve and I'll be Adam." Mabel: "All right. Well?" Willie: "Now you tempt me to eat your apple, and I'll give way to temptation."

Tired of Waiting.

THEY had been engaged a long time, and one evening were reading the paper together. "Look, love, only £2 10s. for a suit of clothes!" "Is it a wedding suit?" she asked, looking naïvely at her lover. "Oh, no," he replied, "it's a business suit." "Well, I meant business," she replied.

A Life Sentence.

FATHER (to his little son, who has been robbing an orchard): "Never mind, my son. You're sure to be imprisoned." Little Son: "But you've stolen, pa. I heard ma say that years ago you stole her heart; and you weren't imprisoned, were you?" Father (sadly): "Oh, yes, I was, my son. I was sentenced to penal servitude for life."

Had to be Careful.

FOND MOTHER (to daughter): "Jennie, did you kiss young Gaskins again to-night?" Daughter: "Yes, mamma; he's just lost an uncle, and I was sorry for him." "Well, Jennie, let this be the last. I'm afraid if you keep on encouraging him with your sympathy, he won't have a relative left in the wide, wide world."

More Eloquent Than Words.

A CERTAIN volunteer, who was a great man in his own eyes, was, by some influence, appointed captain. He could hardly speak of anything but his new dignity. Meeting a friend one day, he accosted him thus: "Well, Jim, I suppose you know I have been appointed captain?" "Yes," said Jim, "I heard so." "Well, what do your folks say about it?" asked the captain. "They don't say nothin'," replied truthful James; "they just laugh."

A Model Husband.

WIFE: "I saw the loveliest lace curtains to-day, only half-a-crown, and I wanted them awfully, but I knew you wished to economise, and so I didn't get them." Husband: "That's too bad, my dear, you should have got them. Anything which adds to your happiness and brings gladness to your eyes, anything which lightens your domestic cares and gilds the towering clouds, anything which borders with sweet flowers, the thorny paths of duty, and appeals pleasantly to your æsthetic nature, making life more worth living, home a paradise, you are welcome, doubly welcome to, my angel—if it doesn't cost more than half-a-crown."

Thoughtful Consideration.

"OH, mamma," she said, with a little burst of girlish confidence, "what do you think? Mr. Iddyot proposed last night." "Ah, did he, my dear. And what did my little girl say?" "Oh, I told him that an engagement was too solemn and sacred a thing to me to be entered into without serious and thoughtful consideration, and that I would give him my answer in a week. And now, mamma mine, we must go to work and find out if he really and truly has a thousand a year." "You dear, wise little girl!" cried the fond mother, folding her child to her bosom and weeping softly over her.

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Your Editor Chats.

This, as you will observe, is a new feature, but I have inaugurated it because I want to get on speaking terms with my readers, to tell them of anything particular which I am contemplating publishing in *Short Stories*, and to solicit their opinion upon the paper which I bring out week by week.

You will notice that just below I am announcing a new competition. I want you all to go in for this, as, by its means, I hope to get some sort of idea of the kind of short story you best like. So that you will be helping me by entering the competition, and at the same time may secure to yourself the prize of £1, or, if not that, one of the twenty-five consolation prizes offered.

I suppose I have hardly a reader who is not intensely interested in the new serial. Well, it has been secured with no little difficulty, and right up to the concluding chapter, Mr. Farmer maintains his reputation as a thrilling and clever story writer.

But I have another feature in hand which is every bit as interesting, and on account of the legal trouble we have had before we were allowed to publish, is perhaps more exciting. You know, of course, to what I refer—"The Confessions of Cynthia." These are a series of revelations made by a Lady's Companion, and will give you a better insight into the secret crimes which are often practised in high life than any fictitious novel could do. I use the first of these next week, and my cover for that number, will depict a card-room scene, which plays a most important part in the first adventure. But I mustn't tell you any more about it now. Be sure, however, that you do not miss it, and you will be doing the paper a service by telling those of your friends about it whom you know will be interested, besides giving them something which it will be well worth their while to read.

I shall have more to tell you next week.

£1 for an Opinion.

That is what we are willing to offer for the best opinion as to what are **the three nicest tales in this number** of *Short Stories*.

All you have to do is to send in on a post-card the names of the stories you consider the best in the order of their merit, with your own name and address. The reader who names the three stories which are most popular with the majority will receive the first prize, while the twenty-five whose lists come next in order of popularity will receive **handsome silver-plated pencil-cases as Consolation prizes.**

Try! It will cost you nothing and you may be succeesful.

Opinions should be addressed to the Competition Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

The competition closes on June 10th.

Coronation Month Weddings.

Nine Thousand Rings Sold.

The month in which King Edward will be crowned bids fair to establish a record for weddings. One firm alone has this year sold 9,000 engagement rings; the engaged couples intending—unless disease or accident prevents—to tie the knot in June. Weakly women, married or single, have in Bile Beans a certain remedy for the ailments and disorders which afflict their sex at this season. This is shown by the experience of Miss Bertha Mosedale, of Georgina Street, Bury, Lancashire, who to a *Bury Boro Advertiser* reporter said: "For a long time I suffered from inflammation of the lungs, which left me extremely weak. I was fagged with the least effort. For a time I struggled on, but was forced finally to give up work altogether. I had become so reduced that I was in bed six weeks. So completely had my appetite left me that during the whole of that time I don't think I ate a shillingsworth of food in a week. I was at last led to try Charles Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness by reading a book in which was recorded a number of cures by Bile Beans. Some of these cases had been worse than my own. I had not been taking the Beans long before I was able to return to my duties, and now I am better than ever I have been in my life. Bile Beans are unequalled for anæmic debility, indigestion, sleeplessness, headache, liver and kidney disorders, constipation, nervousness, female ailments, pimples, bad breath, buzzing in the head, and for skin eruptions and all blood impurities. All chemists stock them, or you may obtain them from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120 London Wall, London, E.C., by sending prices, one and three-halfpence or two and nine. They give health which is better than virgin gold.

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A Point of Law.

The Tale of a Scheme Which Failed.

Mr. Aubrey Snashall required a piece of legal information. It was one that any solicitor might have supplied, but for the elucidation of so simple a point, a lawyer's fee seemed scarcely worth incurring, and Mr. Snashall was not by nature inclined to generosity. In vain he studied the "Answers to Correspondents" columns in some likely papers. One apparently demented reader sounded an editor as to the legality of marrying one's mother-in-law, but no earnest seeker after truth, gratis, requested a reply to the knotty question—can a guardian marry his ward before she becomes of age?

In the answer, whether affirmative or negative, Mr. Snashall was vitally and personally interested. Ada Winter, his ward, was not only a highly prepossessing young lady; but in about seven months time she would attain her majority and step into quite a considerable fortune. What a happy and useful arrangement if he could marry the girl, give her the benefit of his life-long protection, and himself cease for ever from the rather vulgar necessity of making money by selling hides! A disparity of eighteen years in their respective ages hardly dimmed the romantic prospect. Ada was a sensible young girl, and would prefer the seasoned article.

Turning over the unsolved question in his mind one night, Aubrey Snashall suddenly bethought himself of his nephew, Oscar Paterson, who had been recently called to the Bar, and was now waiting expectantly for briefs. How stupid not to have remembered him before, particularly as he was an occasional visitor at the house! The claim of relationship of course precluded the possibility of any fee being suggested, (Mr. Snashall reflected with glee that there were now both a barrister and a doctor in the family), and, if managed with discretion, the real purpose of the inquiry would never be discovered.

Mr. Snashall drew a sheet of notepaper from his case.

"I'll write and ask Oscar to dine with me at the Club to-morrow night," he said to himself; then over a fresh cigar quietly matured his tactics.

* * * * *

Aubrey Snashall and his nephew sat chatting together in the smoking room of the club. The dinner from which they had lately risen had worked out at a rather higher figure for Mr. Snashall than usual, but Oscar must be put in his pleasantest mood. To the furtherance of that end his uncle had sympathised with him for about the sixth time on the tardy appearance of briefs.

"Yes, uncle, 'tis a nuisance, but I suppose every young barrister has to cultivate patience."

"I must see if I can bring any influence to bear, Oscar. I shall put in a word for you in one or two quarters."

"Thanks! I hate to be idle. If I remain briefless, the only solution seems to marry a rich wife, and——"

Mr. Snashall gave a start, but quickly recovered himself, and turned a frowning brow upon the young man, who sat with the light of mischief in his eyes.

"A step like that, Oscar, would not at all square with—ahem, our family ideals."

"I should require to be in love first, of course. Sometimes, though, love and money go together, don't they?" He directed a slightly anxious glance towards the elder man.

"Sometimes, I admit," returned the other uncomfortably. "More often in books perhaps than in real life. By the way, I am reading such an interesting novel."

"Not a problem novel?"

"In a sense—yes."

"What's the title, uncle?" Oscar prepared to make a note on his shirt cuff.

"Dear me. How stupid. I quite forget. It's a man's name—something like—no, I can't remember. I wish authors wouldn't christen their books with the outlandish names of their characters."

"And what's the plot?" persisted his nephew.

"I've only read a few chapters as yet. It's about a Colonel, a silly old man nearing sixty, who wants to marry an ugly ward of his for her money. A most disgraceful wish, I call it. She isn't twenty one, and he thinks that he can't legally marry her, being under age."

"The old rascal should consult a lawyer."

"Ye—es, Oscar! The lawyer would of course——"

"Laugh at his fears. The marriage would be legal enough. How does the story go on?"

"I've got no further at present. You know I have so little time for reading. Excuse me! I see my friend Binning over there. I must go and have a word with him."

Walking to his chambers a little later, Oscar recalled the memories of the evening. It had been most agreeably spent and the dinner was first-class; moreover, Uncle Aubrey had proved more than usually gracious. He could not help wondering if at their next meeting those pleasant relations would be maintained.

Strange how several times his uncle had not appeared at his usual ease! He seemed to have something on his mind, and talked with less self-assurance than was customary for him. Queer his mentioning a novel! He had always conveyed to Oscar the impression of being a man who read no fiction except what one finds (in abundant measure sometimes) in the daily papers.

Suddenly a thought struck Oscar which made him stand stock still in the centre of the pavement and emit a prolonged whistle. Had that reference to the guardian and his ward a secret significance? At the time his suspicions had not been aroused, but he now felt that the subject was dragged into the conversation by the heels. Was it possible that Uncle Aubrey wanted to marry Ada Winter, and had employed a little ruse whereby to test the legality of his position?

Oscar seemed vastly amused at the idea.

"If that's Uncle's game," he said to himself, as he turned the latch key in his lock, "I guess he will have an unpleasant awakening in the morning."

* * * * *

Mr. Aubrey Snashall had slept the sleep of the just. Thanks to his nephew—his dear unsuspicious boy—his one doubt had been dissipated, and he had but to step in and claim his prize. Never had he felt so contented with life as on this particular morning.

Ada Winter and his lady housekeeper, Mrs. Dobson, were already seating themselves at the breakfast-table as he entered the dining-room. He greeted both cheerily, failing to notice that on his appearance Ada slipped a letter which she had been reading into her pocket and slightly coloured.

"What a jolly morning! I feel ten years younger on a day like this," said Mr. Snashall, dropping into his accustomed chair.

The remark was designed to fit in with the spruce and juvenile appearance which he had purposely studied this morning. By a liberal application of oil he had toned down the growing greyness of his hair which, from not being brushed backwards, showed less than at the temples. His neck-tie, edging a high collar, was bright and sportive. The

(*Concluded on page 735.*)

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The college which Dr. Sage has founded proposes to give away $10,000 worth of the above books absolutely free so long as the special edition lasts. Any person who is in earnest can get a copy merely by writing for it. This book is handsomely illustrated by the finest half tone engravings. It tells you how the marvellous power of hypnotism has been used to cast a secret mystic spell over people without their knowledge, and how they have been for months, and in some cases even years obeying the royal will of another. It gives you the secret of the development of what Senator Chauncey M. Depew calls the money making microbe. Don't think because you lack a fine education and are working for a small salary that you cannot better your condition; do not think that because you are now successful in life that you cannot be more successful. Dr. Sage's book has been read, and his methods are to-day being used by many of the richest men in the world. They know the value of personal influence, of hypnotic power. If you are interested address penny post-card to-day to the New York Institute of Science, Dept. VA17, Rochester, New York, U.S.A. and a copy of Dr. Sage's book will be sent you by return mail absolutely free. This is a rare opportunity to learn the uses and possibilities of the most wonderful, marvellous and mysterious power known to man. The book is enthusiastically indorsed by the most prominent business men, ministers of the gospel, lawyers, and doctors. It should be in every home; it should be read by every man and woman in this country who wants to better his condition in life, who wants to achieve greater financial success, win friends, gratify his ambitions and get out of life the pleasure and happiness which the Creator intended he should enjoy.

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familiar frock-coat was temporarily discarded in favour of a light lounge jacket.

"You're not taking a holiday to-day, are you, uncle?" Ada asked, with a glance at his attire. "Uncle?" was her usual mode of address, but somehow it jarred upon Mr. Snashall's ears to-day.

"No! Only a whim of mine! I want to pretend that summer is really here at last."

It was customary after breakfast for both Ada and Mrs. Robson to retire and leave Mr. Snashall to the uninterrupted perusal of his newspaper, a duty which he faithfully discharged even to the advertisements. This morning, however, the girl quietly closed the door after the housekeeper and came back to the table, toying for excuse with some of the tea-cups.

"Any news in the paper, uncle?"

"None at all, dear!" He threw the sheets aside. "Come and sit down. There's something particular I want to say to you."

"So do I. Something very particular!"

"How curious! Which shall begin?"

"Oh, I must. The lady's prerogative you know."

"All right, Ada. Fire ahead!"

He crossed his knees complacently, and, smiling into her face, folded his hand over hers. It was sweet to feel her so near and to know that in a few minutes she would be yet nearer.

He waited without suspicion for her to begin. Doubtless something trifling had gone wrong in the domestic sphere. Perhaps the cook was anxious to better herself, or Mrs. Dobson—amusing thought—hoped shortly to discard her widow's weeds.

"Uncle, I want your consent to marry."

Mr. Snashall sat suddenly upright in his chair, and swerved round with lightning-like velocity. Had he possibly heard aright?

"Marry!" he shrieked.

"Yes. I'm getting quite old now."

A bomb exploding beneath Mr. Snashall's feet could not have more thoroughly disconcerted him. For the moment he was quite speechless with surprise and indignation. That splendid scheme of his at one blow lay shattered into fragments.

"I'm so sorry if I've hurt you, uncle. But you know it would come some day, and——"

"Ada, it is impossible. You must not marry yet. I'm sure you wouldn't wish to repay me thus for what I have been to you all these years."

The girl's lips stiffened with resolution.

"It needs must be, Uncle Aubrey. I've pledged my word and out of real honest love too."

"But my consent," he faintly objected.

"You'll give me that like an old dear, I know."

She placed her hand on his shoulder and continued playfully, but with determination. "And if you should withhold it, in about seven months' time I shall be positively my own mistress, and after all a trousseau cannot be got ready in a day."

Slowly Mr. Snashall was coming to realise the hopelessness of the situation. This determined girl would clearly brook no interference, nor could any inducement turn her from her purpose; she was complete mistress of the situation. He had wanted her for her money before; now, strangely enough, he wanted her for herself. Standing triumphantly beside him, she yet fascinated him more than ever. What a charming addition she would make to any man's home! In the first shock of the revelation he had forgotten to inquire the name.

"Who is it, Ada?" he simply asked.

"Someone you know and someone you like. Quite young—only twenty-three—and with the most brilliant prospects. Can't you guess?"

"No, I can't."

"There you dear, silly, blind thing, I won't keep you in suspense. Why, it's your own nephew, Oscar Paterson!"

In the afternoon of that self-same day, young Paterson, blessing for the moment his brieflessness, went to a quiet corner of Battersea Park where Ada Winter was to meet him by appointment. They had enjoyed various previous meetings in that sylvan spot, but to-day's would probably prove the most momentous of all. That morning the storm must have broken. How had Ada fared under it, and what was the result?

Oscar arrived first at their accustomed seat, screened from observation by a convenient cluster of foliage. Feeling restless he began to pace up and down. His uncle's face, pallid with fury, loomed up before his imagination. A thwarted suitor was really not at all a pleasant person for anybody to encounter.

A few minutes later Ada came hurrying along the path.

"Oh, Oscar, I've had such an awful time," she commenced.

"Is it all right?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, but——"

"Thank goodness! Come and sit down. Now tell me all about it."

She recounted the scene between herself and Mr. Snashall.

"When he heard who it was, I thought he would explode. I never saw anyone so upset in my life. I don't understand it in the least. He never seemed to care for me half so much as that. And why, Oscar, did you send that mysterious little letter I got at breakfast, telling me to speak to him before he got the chance of speaking to me?"

"I suspected something of which I am certain now. Haven't you guessed it, Ada?"

"No, it's all a puzzle to me."

"Then prepare for a shock? He wanted to marry you himself."

She received it with incredulity which gradually disappeared as Oscar related in detail the events of the previous evening and she thought everything out. When all was told, they both leant back and laughed consumedly.

"Uncle Aubrey will be shy of meeting me again won't he, Ada? I did give him, though, a perfectly disinterested piece of advice."

"Perfectly! But I think he'll gladly pay six and eightpence to solve his next delicate point of law."

From the Lips of Experience.

Old Henpeck: "Nonsense! The idea of talking so about marriage! You and my daughter have not been engaged over six months." Young Man: "Do you believe in long engagements?" Old Henpeck: "Certainly, my young friend, certainly. The longer the engagement the shorter the marriage."

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By Madge Morris.

[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

A Querulous Friend.

"KITTY" is a candid girl. She admits that her temperament is really hateful. While one day she is on the best of terms with Dolly, her particular friend, the next she becomes simply horrid. Now Dolly has begun to get a little tired of this, and has told "KITTY" sorrowfully that she fears their friendship cannot continue, unless "KITTY" tries to be nicer to her.

I think "KITTY" had better, in her own interest, take Dolly's suggestion seriously, at any rate for the time being. I know quite what kind of girl she is, and think the best cure would be for her to learn to value a friend by experiencing what alienation really means. Let "KITTY" and Dolly not meet each other for a month, and if, at the end of that time, they find they miss each other, they will come together as a matter of course, and perhaps "KITTY" will have then learnt to be more careful of the little restraints necessary in preserving one's attachments.

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Should We Return to our Old Lovers?

FOR a year "LEO" has been parted from Maisie, his old sweetheart. They had grown cool towards each other, owing to misunderstandings which resulted from mischief-making "friends," and have never since had the sense to make it up, preferring to keep at a safe distance from each other, and to avoid meeting whenever possible. Recently they were forced to speak to each other, and "LEO" felt a return of the old spark directly he heard her voice. At the same time he does not think anything could restore their old relationship. He asks me whether I should advise him to endeavour to resume it.

Evidently Maisie is the girl whom "LEO" at heart really loves. The year's absence may have been the very thing necessary to consolidate their affections. If after that time he has found that the old spark is still alive, and that he is really as fond of her as ever, I think he should again resume the affair. When he says he could not resume the old relations with her, does he mean that they could never—well—kiss each other again? Nonsense, "LEO." Try a few more meetings, and all the silly coolness will rapidly disappear, if I know anything about the eccentricities of love.

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The Neglected Beauty.

"VIOLA" modestly writes to me to tell me she is very beautiful. I do not doubt this for one moment. Quite probably she is more familiar with her image than others, from more constant observation. However, she finds that, in spite of her looks—which are, she knows, universally admired—other comparatively unattractive girls appear to be infinitely more popular with the men, who never "run after" her. She asks if I know of similar cases, and if they are likely to coincide with her own.

I know of very many such cases. "VIOLA" should understand that actual beauty is seldom in itself a woman's most attractive feature. To draw men she must possess some quality—one might call it "winsomeness"—which is practically half the battle in a woman. Many very pretty girls—perhaps including "VIOLA"—are so conscious of their looks that they are apt to be contemptuous of the rest of human kind. They are accordingly very proud, selfish, and capricious, and though later on one man may find these attributes the embellishments of a goddess, to the general run of men they are grave defects, and do much to neutralise in them any admiration they may have for their looks. As a matter of fact, many men of my acquaintance tell me they are afraid, in advance, of the accepted beauty, as they suspect that such characteristics are almost certain to accompany extreme good looks. For this reason, therefore, they make their advances, in the first instance, to the plainer girls, who possess more winsomeness and warmth. The result is that cold beauty often finds itself last in the struggle—until, of course, the rightful claimant comes along to rescue it.

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More Stage Fever.

Do you really want to go on the stage very much, "GILBERT"? Are you quite sure that you can act, and that so well that you would make instant headway on the boards? Then what is more simple than to start your career by joining an amateur dramatic society, such as must exist in your neighbourhood, and trying your capacities there? If, as you say, the spirit of Irving burns within you, it cannot fail to strike those who will witness your first performance. At any rate, let nothing induce you to think of throwing up any appointment you have to endeavour to get engaged in a London company. That way lies ruin and poverty. What I am telling you is, I know, very stock advice, but there are far too many girl and men suffering from stage fever, that I should let an opportunity pass of putting the matter in its real light to those who appear as yet to be ignorant of it.

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Freckles.

DON'T fret so much about your freckles, "ANNIE H." You say you have light golden hair, and rather small features, with nice grey eyes. Well, what is the matter with a few freckles? You make quite a mistake if you suppose they are a disfigurement. They probably serve to show up the beauty of that hair, and those eyes, in a way that, perhaps, an unfreckled complexion would fail to do. Further, if it is the young men you are thinking of, don't be afraid on that score. Most of them like freckles, as they show a girl to be at any rate in pretty good health, and accustomed to the open air. Besides, there are too many pasty-faced people about already for one to wish to see their number added to.

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How to be Christened.

AT a christening, "H. J. Y.," the nurse should carry the baby from the house to the church in her arms, and keep it there until the commencement of the service. She should then hand the child over to the godmother. The father should, as soon as the christening party enters the church, go to the vestry and give in the infant's name to the clergyman plainly written on a piece of paper, also any details necessary affecting the child's birth. The nurse should again take the baby after the ceremony. The fee, which varies with the means of the sponsor from five shillings upwards, is paid by the godfather, and half a crown should go to the verger. The former fee should be placed on the register, or table, not handed to the clergyman.

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Tact Wanted.

"CANTAB" is very intimate with a young lady, but thinks she is too old for him, as well as being of delicate health. Recently her father introduced him to some friends as the lady's sweetheart, which surprised him very much, as he has no thought of marrying her. How should he act without hurting her feelings. I should tell her that you took it as a great compliment being introduced as her sweetheart, but that the idea of your standing in such a relation of honour as that to herself had never entered your head, that you like and admire her as a friend, which feeling you hope she reciprocates.

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Cynthia: Her Companion.

No. I.

WITH THE SMART SET IN A COUNTRY HOUSE.

"THIS," said cousin, Frances Norton, with a wave of the hand, "is my new companion, Cynthia Hamilton."

The introduction left me speechless and standing. The men—the room seemed furnished with men—stared, and a pink-faced youth, with a wonderful thing in waistcoats, opined I was a "lucky girl," otherwise I was not noticed.

"Sit down, Cynthia," said my cousin. "Fluffy, get the child a cup of tea."

Thankfully I dropped into the nearest chair, and Fluffy—the name suggested a pet poodle, and I felt surprised when a middle-aged man, with a sleek head, responded to the call—brought me tea and cake.

I pushed my chair into a less conspicuous position, and, under cover of my cup and saucer examined my surroundings.

The room was large and well lit, but furnished in a style that surprised me. The floor was of oak, spread with rugs, of bright colours, something like Liberty bed-spreads. There was a miscellanous collection of prints on the wall, and quite a large number of china pots in the corners of the room and on the mantelpiece.

I was not struck with the general effect, and wondered that Lady Winchin—at whose place Frances was staying—had not better taste. I learnt afterwards that it was quite the smartest thing in smoke-rooms—all the same, it reminded me of a sixpenny bazaar.

There were a good many people having tea, some ten men and as many women. I noticed that none of the latter took much notice of my cousin, but the men talked to her eagerly.

I had not seen Frances since her marriage eight years back to Richard Norton, a coffee planter in Jamaica. Many changes had come in Frankie's life since then. She had lost her husband, left Jamaica, and settled in England. But no change, I thought, could have been greater, than that which had taken place in my cousin herself. I remembered her at the convent, at Bruges, where we had been educated, an angular, not to say awkward girl, with a sallow skin and a mouse-coloured mop of hair. The Frankie of to-day was very different; she was tall and slender, with splendid shoulders, long limbs, and a marked grace of movement, her skin creamy, flushed to pink in her cheeks, a pink that at times deepened to carmine, while her hair was wavy and of a bright chestnut shade. I could not tell whether, or no, her face was beautiful—others besides me found it difficult to decide—but that it possessed a fascination far more powerful than mere loveliness was indisputable. Perhaps the secret lay in her ever-varying expression, or, it may have been her eyes, soft and dark as pansies, that attracted. On that afternoon she was the centre of a group of men, the other women some of them handsome, all well dressed, being left in the cold

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My meditations, at this point, were interrupted by the pink-faced youth who had spoken to me on my arrival.

"Have some more tea," he said affably, "no? Well, let me take your cup," and he subsided into a chair beside me.

"Awfully fond of your cousin. Eh?" he asked.

I explained that I had a great affection for Frances, but that we had not met each other for eight years, "not since I was a child of eleven," I explained.

"Been at school ever since?" he queried.

"Yes, I've come straight from Bruges. Frances wrote to me to join her here."

He nodded, smiled amiably, if vacuously, and gazed at Frankie.

"Lovely woman, your cousin. We're all gone on her, Miss Hamilton. I'm fearfully in love, you know, not that I've a ghost of a chance. Still, you never *can* tell," he added fatuously.

"Who is that tall, distinguished-looking man talking to my cousin?" I asked.

The pink youth grinned.

"Sir John Strickland, late Colonel of Hussars, simply mad on Mrs. Norton," but—with a shake of the head, "there's no chance for him; he's poor as a church mouse, a beggarly fifteen hundred a year, no more; and that, you know, Miss Hamilton, is simply nothing to a woman like your cousin."

It seemed a great deal to me. I looked with interest at Sir John, a man of about forty-five, square shouldered, keen faced, with a look of pride about the well-cut mouth, and a certain carriage of the head that compelled the term aristocratic in describing him. His manner was very courteous, and his speech singularly free from modern flippancies.

He was bending over my cousin with a look of admiration in his eyes.

"Yes," said the pink boy, following my gaze, "you're right, Miss Hamilton, it is a case."

I wondered how Frankie felt towards Sir John, she did not talk much to him but gave more of her attention to a younger man, who, seated on the hearthrug, leant his head against her knee in a confiding sort of fashion.

"That's Hartland, Lord Kinross, you know," said my informant. "Lucky chap!" he added enviously.

His lordship, I judged was about twenty-six or seven. He was tall, slight, and boyish in figure, a pleasant face, though his features were quite ordinary. Impossible to compare him with Sir John, in my opinion; and then a moment later that opinion changed. Lord Kinross, I discovered, had the most charming smile in the world. It transformed him from a commonplace person to an intensely fascinating one.

I wondered which of her two admirers Frankie liked the better. Lord Kinross or Sir John? Both seemed equally devoted to her.

"I suppose"—the pink person once more disturbed my reverie—"I suppose you know Fluffy, don't you?"

I intimated that my acquaintance with the sleek-headed gentleman only dated from that afternoon.

"Really! I made sure you'd heard of him at any rate. He's such a great friend of your cousin's. Thomson is his real name, you know, but, as I told him, it was too impossible for words, so we call him Fluffy, eh!"

My new acquaintance had a habit of thus finishing his sentences. At first I took it that he meant to ask a question, and I felt distressed that I never knew the answer. After a while I realised that it meant nothing, still it was disconcerting.

I should have liked to hear more about Sir John and Lord Kinross, but felt shy at asking too many questions. Apparently my silence bored the youth, for he presently got up and strolled away.

I did not feel so strange now that I knew more of the people round me. I was warmly interested in Sir John Strickland and Lord Kinross; the pink youth, also an admirer of my cousin's, did not greatly concern me. As for Fluffy—at that moment patiently holding a plate of macaroons for my cousin—I could not determine if he was merely a friend of Frankie's or if he entertained for her a warmer feeling. It was a difficult question, and one to which I did not easily find the answer.

Some of the women now left the room, and the group round Frankie split up, only Sir John and his rival remained. Lord Kinross, still on the hearthrug, looked extremely comfortable, but Sir John seemed ill at ease. He leant against the mantelpiece serious and silent, frowning when Frankie lightly smoothed the dark head resting on her lap. His lordship took possession of her hand, and patted it admiringly.

"Pretty—isn't it, Strickland?" he said, and audaciously kissed the slim, white fingers.

Sir John, however, made no reply, but deliberately walked out of the room, leaving Frankie and Lord Kinross alone—except for me.

"You're atrocious, Hartland," said my cousin, "you really mustn't do such things."

He faced round and stared at her.

"You don't object really?" he asked.

My cousin flushed.

"Seriously, Frankie, I didn't think you minded. I'll behave better in future. It's only the exuberance of my admiration, you know." He smiled as he spoke, but Frankie shook her head.

"You don't deserve forgiveness," she said and got up from her chair.

"Still"—Lord Kinross smiled at her—"I am forgiven?"

"I suppose so—you generally get your own way."

"Women are generally so kind in giving it me," he murmured.

Frankie made no answer, but moved towards the door. Half-way across the room she stopped. "Good gracious, Cynthia," she exclaimed, "I'd forgotten all about you. Come upstairs with me and dress."

"The Moat," as Lady Winchin's place was called, was a lovely house—outside the smoke-room. The hall was very large and lofty, with pointed arches of black oak curiously carved. Gnome-like faces peeped out from wreaths of acorns, grotesques peered from garlands of oak apples. The hall was fitted with electric light, and the effect of the innumerable lamps with their silver points of flame, against the blackness of the oak, was dazzling.

From the hall we passed up a wide staircase carpeted with a soft felt of palest green. The walls of the staircase were lined with pictures, and along the wide corridor that led to Frankie's room, were statues.

I had never seen or heard of any room so lovely as my cousin's. The draperies and curtains were of pale mauve, embroidered with an artistic design of deep-hued pansies. The carpet was white with clusters of heartsease, and the chairs white also with pale-coloured cushions. The tall mirror in its oaken frame reflected the cheery fire, which gleamed on the silver brushes, and the crystal bottles on the toilet table. The bed was a mass of soft white drapery, and the subtle fragrance of violets filled the room.

Frankie drew a lounge chair towards the fire and motioned me to take another. For awhile we sat in silence. I felt strange, not to say shy, and waited for my cousin to speak. I longed to tell her how pleased I had been to receive her letter

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engaging me as companion, how excited I was at the thought of all I should see in this new life; so different from the years passed in the convent.

At last she turned towards me.

"You're pleased to come to me, Cynthia?"

"Very," I returned, enthusiastically.

"Tired of the convent?" she asked with an amused look in her eyes.

"I was very happy there as a pupil," I answered, "but I did not like the idea of becoming a teacher. The sisters all sent their love to you, Frankie, and the girls—those who knew you—gave me all sorts of nice messages."

Frankie nodded, but did not show much interest.

"I am pleased to have you with me, Cynthia," she said after a while, "and I daresay we shall get on very well. It will be your own fault if not. There's only one thing you have to remember, never to speak of me or my affairs to anyone. If you do I shall send you back to Bruges without the least compunction."

I flushed, pained by her words.

"I should not have done so in any case, Frankie," I replied. "Besides, what do I know of you?"

She took a quick glance at me and frowned.

"Quite sufficient to chatter," she said coldly. "It doesn't suit me for you to discuss my past, present, or future. You understand?"

"Yes," I said quietly, "I understand."

There were many things I wished to ask my cousin. I had looked forward to hearing about her life in Jamaica. I felt curious as to what had happened during the two years that had elapsed since Richard Norton's death. But what she had said prohibited any such questions. I had parted from my cousin eight years back at the convent, six years of which she had spent in a remote part of Jamaica. Now we met in the house of Lady Winchin, a wealthy woman, known in Society as one of the leaders of the smart set. It would have been interesting to learn the chain of circumstances that had brought Frankie from Jamaica to "The Moat." They were so very far apart.

I glanced at my cousin as she sat by the fire. She was beautifully dressed, and wore some valuable rings.

I drew my own conclusions as to what had happened. Richard Norton had left her better off than was expected—he had not been considered a rich man. Money I had been told is the key that unlocks every door, and Frankie was charming as well as rich.

My cousin interrupted my thoughts.

"You're very pretty, Cynthia," she said. "I was half afraid you wouldn't be good looking. You were a sweet child, but that's nothing to go by. I can't bear ugly people," she added. "There," she stood up suddenly and patted my cheek, "run away and dress, and don't forget what I tell you."

I found my room with the assistance of a friendly maid, and soon completed my toilette—my frock was of cream cashmere. I felt afraid to go downstairs by myself, but sat shivering on my bed until the sound of the gong compelled me to venture I reached the hall, and followed a stream of men and women into what I took to be the drawing-room. I gathered a general impression of yellow draperies and family portraits, but had not time to notice anything more closely.

I caught a glimpse of Frankie, in black and silver with scarlet poppies, and was attracted by a dark girl with wonderful eyes and a magnificent pair of diamond ear-rings. Then the gong sounded again and we all moved towards the door. I found myself beside the pink youth, who smiled a welcome, and piloted me to the dining-room.

We sat about half way down the table, opposite Lord Kinross and the girl with the diamond ear-rings. Frankie was at the other end, near to Sir John. I noticed that his lordship seemed very attentive to his neighbour, and hardly cast a glance at Frankie.

"Who is that?" I asked; "the girl next to Lord Kinross, I mean."

"Mary Vernon is the lady's name," replied the youth. "Handsome, eh!"

"Very," I returned. "Lord Kinross also seems to think so."

"That's as it should be," returned my companion; "they're engaged to be married, you know."

The surprise I felt at this piece of intelligence took away my appetite. If Lord Kinross was engaged to Mary Vernon, what did he mean by showing such admiration for my cousin that very afternoon? I was puzzled, and conversation languished for the rest of the repast.

I had a wretched time in the drawing-room after dinner, everyone was talking and laughing, and I felt quite in the cold. At last I spied out a window seat where, sheltered by curtains, I could remain in comfort.

It was very entertaining to watch all that was going on—almost as good as being at a play. After a while the men came up. Sir John and some others surrounded Frankie until Lord Kinross appeared, then they drifted off.

My cousin passed up the room with Kinross towards the conservatory, where they remained some time. Two dowagers commented audibly upon this fact.

"What do you think of *that*?" said the first, glancing after the couple.

The other shrugged her shoulders.

"Mary Vernon is a fool," she answered; "and the Norton woman is as artful as she's high. Still Kinross won't go too far, if Mary is fairly sensible and gives up the cards."

"Is that the trouble?"

"Nothing else. Kinross wouldn't allow a passing tenderness for the Norton to interfere with his marriage, but if Mary doesn't stop gambling there'll be no marriage at all. Kinross is by no means straight-laced, but sets his face against high play."

"I thought Lady Winchin disapproved of it?"

"So she does, but she can't lock her guests in their rooms at night, and"—the lady shrugged and lowered her voice, I caught the words, "after twelve, in the smoke-room, most nights."

"And you think that if Mary doesn't pull up in time the Norton will have a chance—I wonder."

"The Norton's no fool," returned her companion.

"Where does she come from, nobody seems to know much of her?"

"Jamaica, she says. I believe she made the acquaintance of the Vernons' on the voyage home. Mary fell in love with her, and introduced her to Lady Winchin, who followed suit. That's all!"

"And her friend—Fluffy, I believe she calls him?"

"He also hails from Jamaica. He came to see her here, and Lady Winchin asked him to stay. She's so shockingly good-natured—dear Lady Winchin. Take my word for it," the dowager became emphatic, "the Norton's a dangerous woman."

The conversation left me puzzled. I went upstairs to bed soon after, but for a long time lay awake thinking over all that I had heard. At last, worn out with excitement and fatigue, I fell asleep.

It must have been hours later when I woke with a great start, my heart thumping with

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a sudden sense of fear. The house was very still, and the night was dark. I sat up and listened anxiously. The next moment I had sprung out of bed in a panic. In the room under mine were footsteps, voices low and cautious. In such a house, at such an hour there could be but one explanation—*burglars!*

Throwing on my dressing gown, I opened the door, and quite beside myself with fear, rushed downstairs in the direction of the noise.

Outside the smoke-room I came to a sudden pause—the door was half open, the *portière* drawn back. From where I stood I could see what went on inside.

On a table in the centre of the room were scattered cards, little heaps of gold, silver, bank notes, and some loose coins. The game had evidently been interrupted, only two persons retained their seats, the rest were surrounding a tall, handsome blonde, named Mrs. Curtis-Blount. There were six people present, the blonde aforesaid, my cousin Frankie and Miss Mary Vernon, Fluffy, the pink youth, and a man in eyeglasses, whom, the pink boy had told me, was a special friend of Mrs. Curtis-Blount's, named Algy Tresham. Mary Vernon and Fluffy were at the table.

"Suc hmeanness, "declared Mrs. Curtis-Blount, "I have never met with; you win two hundred from me, Mary, and then declare you're going to stop play for the night. It's downright shabby not to give me a chance of winning back the money."

"You've taken a good deal more than two hundred from me," retorted Mary. "You've no cause to grumble on that score. I want the two hundred to pay Dick Carew my losses at baccarat. Thank goodness that is the last of my gaming debts. After to-night I shan't play at all for high stakes."

Mrs. Curtis-Blount sneered.

"Oh, if you haven't any money it's a different matter. Seems rather sharp practice though to play high when you haven't the means to settle up."

"Who says I haven't the means?" retorted Mary angrily. "Here, I'll stake a monkey. Go one better if you can," and she glared fiercely at the blonde.

"Thank you, I'm not taking any I.O.U.'s," said that lady sharply.

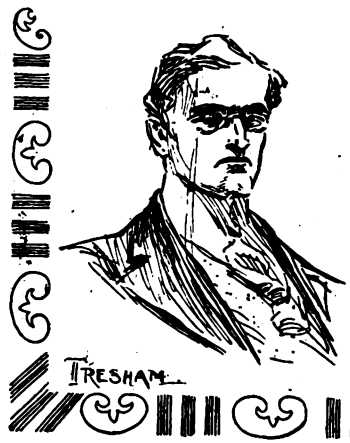
"For shame, Vi," interposed my cousin. "Mary's name is good for a monkey any day."

"Not without Kinross to back it," retorted Mrs. Curtis-Blount.

Mary Vernon started to her feet.

"I am responsible for my own debts," she cried, "and always have been. I've said I'll stake a monkey and I'll keep my word. There!" She took out her diamond ear-rings and dropped them on the table, "I suppose you'll admit they're worth that, and more?"

Mrs. Curtis-Blount nodded and drew near, stretching out her hand towards the jewels on the table.



Frankie quickly interposed.

"You mustn't dream of such a thing, Mary!" she cried, snatching the diamonds from the table.

"Think what a risk you're running. It's not *only* the value, if you should lose them, Kinross——" She paused and whispered eagerly in Mary's ear.

"I don't care," said the girl doggedly. "I've said I'll stake them, and I'll keep my word."

"Mary," said my cousin, "for Heaven's sake consider!" She laid her hand upon the girl's shoulder trying to dissuade her.

"I am going to do it!" was all that Mary said.

In despair my cousin turned away, still holding the jewels, hoping perhaps, that at the last moment Mary, would change her mind.

Frankie stood against the mantelpiece, leaning her head upon her arms, her handkerchief pressed to her face.

"Come, hand them over, Frankie; don't be silly!"

"Oh, you are mad—*mad!*" cried my cousin, and, with a quick movement dropped the jewels in front of Mary.

"That's right!" said the girl. "Now, Fluffy, deal!" and she handed him the cards.

"One moment"—it was the man in glasses who interrupted—"do I understand that Miss Vernon proposes to stake these earrings in lieu of £500?"

"Certainly, why do you ask?" said Mary.

He stooped over the table, closely examining the jewels. After a short scrutiny, he stood up and gave himself a little shake.

"Well?" said Mary. "Well?"

"These are not diamonds," he said coldly, "they are paste."

"*Paste!*" everyone shouted. "*Paste?*"

"Yes; marvellous imitations, I grant you, but imitations only. I have spent too long a time in the Kimberley mines not to know a sham from the real thing."

"You can't know what you are saying!" cried Frankie. "Don't you see you're implying that Miss Vernon is guilty of fraud?"

"Can't help that," replied the man in glasses. "Facts are facts, and paste is paste; ask any jeweller, he'll tell you the same!" and he pointed contemptuously at the earrings.

He spoke quietly but convincingly; even Frankie seemed persuaded.

"Mary, what does it mean?" she cried. "Why did you do it? Have you sold the real stones, or pawned them or what? Why didn't you tell me if you wanted money? For Heaven's sake can't you speak? Don't sit like that. *Mary.*"

But Mary Vernon was too dazed to answer. She sat resting her head upon her arm, her eyes dull, her attitude one of despair. At last she roused herself.

"I swear I have not touched the earrings since Lord Kinross gave them to me!" she declared.

"Kinross!" repeated Frankie. "Oh, Mary, what will he say now?"

At that moment attention was distracted by the sound of footsteps hurrying down the hall. Some one passed me in the darkness, paused for a moment, then crossed the threshold of the smoke-room.

A woman's cry, a short, sharp call of "Hartland," then silence and the shutting of a door.

Lord Kinross had come to answer for himself.

* * * * *

The next morning there was much gossip and many rumours at "The Moat." Lord Kinross had been summoned to town on business and left by an early train. Mary Vernon went later "owing to the illness of her mother." Though everyone accepted the explanations, nobody believed them. It was well known that Lord Kinross had broken off the engagement with Mary Vernon.

Rumour had it that his lordship would have forgiven his sweetheart had she confessed to changing the jewels in her earrings, but that her persistent denial angered him and finally hardened him. Had she confessed he would have pardoned all.

Others hinted that Mary had nothing to confess, and was a deeply, injured individual.

Amidst all these excursions and alarums, Frankie pursued the even tenor of her way. She smiled at the men, ignored the women, and enslaved Sir John more than ever. She wrote frequently to Mary, and exchanged letters with Lord Kinross.

About three weeks after the memorable card-party our visit drew to a close. Frankie intended to take a house in town for

the season, putting up at the Cecil till she found one to suit her.

The day before we left "The Moat," Fluffy, who had gone back to town, sent Frankie a present. We were in the drawing-room after dinner when it arrived—a tiny parcel by a special messenger.

"Something good, I expect!" said Mrs. Curtis-Blount; "let's see what it is, Frankie."

My cousin seemed disinclined to examine the packet just then, and only yielded after much teasing and coaxing.

"Fluffy's always sending me something or other," she said, "He's really very silly."

By this time, most of the women and some of the men had gathered round her.

"Hurry up, Mrs. Norton," said the pink youth, "we're all expectant."

Frankie flushed and her fingers trembled as she fumbled with the spring of a tiny jewel-case.

"You make me nervous!" she declared, with a little laugh.

The next moment the contents of the case were on view. Carefully embedded in blue velvet lay two golden hat-pins with diamond heads.

We all gave an exclamation of delight.

"Too sweet for words!" said one woman.

"Exquisite!" murmured another. "You are very lucky, Mrs. Norton!"

"Very fine stones!" remarked Tresham, the man in glasses taking up the pins. "They seem curiously familiar to me, somehow. Why, by all that's extraordinary, they're identical in shape and colour with Mary Vernon's paste earrings. It is as if they had been copied. It's like a conjuring trick, paste one minute, diamonds the next. Upon my word it beats Maskelyne and Cook!"

Frankie smiled. "I suppose quite a number of diamonds are cut after one pattern," she said, "and of course the same designs are used for paste."

"Of course," agreed Tresham; "it's merely a coincidence. Still, it's curious."

Frankie made no reply. The pins were replaced in the case, and the incident was closed.

But all night long I puzzled over the affair. "Paste one minute, diamonds the next!" Tresham's words haunted me. I sat up breathless with a sudden thought. It was no mere coincidence that caused the diamonds and the paste so closely to resemble each other. This was the explanation:

Mary Vernon's diamonds had been changed for paste. The thief had sold the diamonds, which, by some strange chance had reappeared at "The Moat," as the heads of the golden hat-pins. And they—I fell back faint and dizzy—the diamonds set in the hat-pins were Mary Vernon's.

And the pins were in the possession of my cousin Frankie.

[The reader will no doubt have suspected the truth—that Mrs. Norton, during the card scene, had changed the paste diamonds for the real ones. Fluffy was, of course, her accomplice. Next week tells of the clever way in which Mrs. Norton robs an American millionaire.]

TWO LITTLE KEEPSAKES.

A Pathetic Tale of a Great Loss and its Consolation.

The doctor lingered. He glanced at the man who sat staring through the blurred, unwashed window-glass into the noisy street—staring at nothing. The man's face was full of the dumb grief of the uncultured, the grief that is dumb not because it would not, but because it cannot, speak; the grief that needs the tenderest sympathy in the world. It was hurting the man; and the doctor understood, and lingered in silence.

The man turned his head restlessly; and the doctor, sitting on the side of the tumbled bed, with its shabby coverings, lifted in his arms a small bundle of grey flannel that lay among the unattractive pillows. He loosened the folds of the flannel and gently touched the little pink face thus revealed. The baby stirred and smiled in its sleep. The doctor noted the dimple in its cheek, and its fringe of yellow hair. He again glanced at the man's averted face, sullen and hard in its grief.

"What have you named your little girl?" was his unexpected question. The doctor was a young man, but it happened that he understood the man's sorrow for his wife, so lately dead, who had left the baby, with its dimple and its fringe of yellow hair, and its baby girlhood, for a keepsake, for a farewell gift. He offered his sympathy very gradually and tenderly.

"Named her? I dunno; don't care. If it hadn't been for her, my wife wouldn't have died!" He met the doctor's serious brown eyes with a defiant stare, which the doctor quite understood. "I don't want to see her: I don't want to talk about her!"

The doctor looked at the baby. "It is a pity not to name her soon. She is such a nice little girl, and she has a dimple in one cheek. My little girl has a dimple in one cheek. It is the prettiest way for a little girl to have dimples, I think—just one in each cheek." He looked at the child's cheek, but he was thinking more of the man than the little girl's dimple.

"An' 'ave you a little girl?" asked the man, with his face turned still to the window.

"Yes. Didn't I really tell you?" said the doctor. "She is the dearest little girl in the world! There couldn't possibly be another one half so nice."

"An' what is it that makes her so out o' the common? Likely as not there's others as fine," remarked the man, with more interest than the doctor expected.

"There couldn't be another so nice to me," said the doctor, turning his eyes to the man. "You see, her mother died when she was even a tinier baby than your little girl, and she is the only child her mother and I had, and she looks like her mother." The doctor's voice was very low. His little girl was not yet three years old, and he had not learnt to speak very often, even to her, of her mother.

The man's face relaxed. "Well, now, an' what's come to

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me came first to you, an' you know how 'tis," he said in wonder.

"Yes," said the doctor, "I know how it is. Yes, the same thing came to me." He brought his lips very closely together, and then he looked at the other man's baby girl, and smiled, and said: "And your little girl has yellow hair and a dimple in one cheek—why don't you look at it?—just as mine has."

The man looked for a moment at the baby; then his face darkened and he said: "If it hadn't been for your little girl I suppose your——"

"Yes," the doctor interrupted, "I know what you are going to say."

He bowed his head and was silent for a few moments. Then he lifted his eyes and said: "Come here and hold your little girl, and I will tell you about my sun-flowers."

"Sunflowers?"

"Yes, now you hold her while I tell you. Yes, that's the way to hold her. Now if you touch her cheek, she will smile in her sleep and you can see her dimple. See?"

The man held the baby in an awkward bundle, and fearfully touched her face. He smiled when the tiny dent came into the pink cheek.

"Is a dimple such a nice thing for a girl to 'ave?" he asked the doctor.

"Very nice," said the doctor gravely.

"I ain't never held the baby afore," said the man. "You are the first person to notice the dimple," he continued, doubtfully.

"Perhaps no one else has seen her smile," said the doctor.

"I ain't held her," the man repeated, unheeding the doctor's explanation of the general ignorance, regarding the baby's dimple, "because ——"

"I suppose you were afraid of dropping her," the doctor interposed. "I used to be."

"No," the man said honestly, "it wasn't that. I didn't want to see her, because if it hadn't been for her *she* wouldn't have died. Ain't you never felt that way?" he asked the other father, with sudden curiosity.

The doctor's voice had a slight quiver in it when finally he spoke. Had he understood less keenly the meaning of the other man's bereavement, he perhaps might not have replied.

With the sympathy of a similar sorrow and a similar consolation, he had heard of this man's utter grief and of his unreasoning resentment toward the child, to whose life the mother had given her own. The doctor had learned much in the three years of his little girl's life, and he had come to tell it to the other man. He found it harder to tell than he had expected, but he did not shrink.

"At first I think I did," he said gently, "and then I saw how much my little girl's mother had left to comfort me. She had left me her own little girl. She —couldn't make up for——"

"Ah, no!" the man murmured.

"She couldn't do that, but she could do a great deal," went on the doctor. "You see, she needed my care. It's the best comfort in the world really to be needed. She helped me to see how much I might do—for her and for other people. She helped me to see that I might, perhaps, make myself worth the—the gift of love I had been given; and then, she is my wife's own little child—and mine," the doctor concluded more simply.

He waited for some comment, but the other man was looking into the face of his little girl. "Do you see what I mean?" the doctor asked.

"Well, I dunno, I dunno," the man said, but he wrapped the grey flannel more carefully round the baby and touched the pink cheek in which the one dimple hid. The doctor smiled; the other man was beginning to understand.

"An' what'd be her name?" he asked.

"That's just what I was going to tell you," the doctor replied. "Her name is Clytie—for the maiden of olden times, who looked at the sun so often that she was changed into a sunflower. You see I always called my wife Clytie because —because she was the bright glory of my life; she was truly a flower of sunlight. My mother and my sisters think Clytie a queer name for my daughter, but you see she is my other flower; she has made the sun shine still in my life."

The doctor again paused, but the other man did not speak; his eyes were bent with new interest upon the pink face of his daughter. The doctor did not hesitate now to offer the full measure of his sympathy. "I have told you these things," he said, "because I was sorry when I heard of your loss, because I understand how you feel, and because I know how bright a sunflowe rthe little child left by the mother, may be to its father; how much it can help the loneliness."

The doctor concluded the telling of his lesson with unfaltering faith in the other man's power to learn it. It was this simple greatness in dealing with the other person; this unfailing belief in the strong bond of a common humanity uniting the rich and the poor, the high and the less high, that had made the first appeal for the doctor to his first sunflower, and caused her to turn to him her bright face. It was sufficiently strong to hold the other man's attention, to make him look with different eyes at his baby.

"An' is yours so much nicer than mine?" the man anxiously asked. "I don't believe she is!"

The doctor laughed softly. He knew now that he had helped the man. "She is the nicest little girl in the world, I think," he said. "Perhaps I can't judge impartially, but she seems nicer to me than any other little girl could be."

"An' that's because she's yours," said the man indulgently. "Now, I'm thinking if we put them together, mine'd be pretty near yours, let alone bein' a little ahead." He had forgotten that he had not wanted to see his baby, that he had refused to look at her.

The doctor remembered, and he said, soberly. "We shall see. When your little girl is a little older you must bring her to see us, and then we will compare the two sunflowers."

"An' it's Clytie yours is named? Well, now, mine'll be Nora. It was *her* name, and it's what I called her." He looked at the doctor for approval.

"Yes," the doctor assented. "It means for you what Clytie means for me."

"Ah, did you see that dimple?" said the man as the baby stirred. "I'm thinkin' your little girl's ain't much better than that."

"You shall see for yourself," said the doctor with a smile. "I must go now and finish my calls, or I won't get home before my sunflower is in bed," he added, seeing that the other father no longer needed him."

The man laid the baby among the pillows, and went with the doctor to the door, and down the first flight of narrow stairs.

"Good day to you," he said. "Really you was kind to come—an' you knowin' how 'tis."

"I came because I do know," the young doctor said. "Good afternoon, and a good night to your sunflower." He shook the man's hand, and ran down the remaining flights of stairs.

The other man went back to the sleeping baby. He stood gazing at its tiny form. He touched its cheek, and the baby smiled and moved one hand from beneath the flannel coverings. The man touched the little hand, and it softly closed around his finger.

"Well, now, if you'd see that!" he said. "Ah, the doctor was right; she is my wife's own girl, and a fine one too with one dimple! Sunflower is a good name for her. But the doctor was conceited enough about his girl, and I'll bet mine's every bit as fine. And it's *her* little girl, yes and mine. Ah, that dimple.

L. Stadd.

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By Right of Deed.

A Love Story of To-Day.

By Way of Explanation.

Exactly seven years ago, persons of means and position themselves, on the "Tontine" with the object of purchasing for their own collective use and benefit the five hundred ton steam yacht, *Trantymere*. The deed of incorporation contained one especially peculiar clause—viz., "that the two sexes shall be equally represented on the membership roll; and, that the member, male or female, who shall, without due notice given (save and except as a passenger on board the said steam yacht *Trantymere*) leave the kingdom (which shall, for the purposes of this deed, be taken to mean the British Isles, as limited by their waters) shall, so far as the *Trantymere* Tontine is concerned, be deemed and accounted dead; his or her proprietary interest in the said steam yacht *Trantymere* from that date ceasing and determining, such proprietary interest reverting to, and for distribution among the surviving members. It is also provided that any member dying while on board the yacht *Trantymere* aforesaid, is hereby empowered to appoint and nominate a new member of either sex in his or her place, and that by virtue of this deed, such appointment and nomination shall hold good up to and including the natural termination of this association."

certain ten associated principle,

CHAPTER I.

The Mysterious "Number Nine."

"*SS. Trantymere,*
"*Off Naples.*

"My Darling Vena,—I am about sick of this with a big S! I wish to goodness that I had never heard of this miserable 'Tontine.' Can't think what possessed me to join it. I suppose, at twenty-one, I was young and foolish. There isn't one of the others (except perhaps old Titherage—you know millionaire Titherage, the Napoleon of Capel Court—) whom one can decently associate with. They have money—presumably—and society indorses them, but, all the same, they are cads, both the men *and* the women.

"I'd throw up the whole thing and come home, if it wasn't that poor old Titherage was taken seriously ill this morning, and has asked me to remain by him. Poisoned macaroni, says our own medico, whose opinion, however, isn't worth much from my point of view.

"There is likely to be a lively time on board should anything happen, as appears very probable, for the women have each her particular pet ready for recommendation to the passing member at the physcological moment. It's absolutely hideous. There is that Willoughby woman; she seems to me to have some underhand scheme on; but she's too smart to let me see her hand. I've almost made up my mind in the event of Titherage's death, to cut the whole concern, and forfeit my share.

"You see, dear, I'm the heir, and you are the governess. Between each, in the present state of things social, there are apt to arise barriers, not of their own making. Folks are inclined to be so officious, aren't they? And yet, darling, I fancy, somehow, that you will be able to hold your own, for my sake, and in spite of kind (?) friends.

"Am sending this to Armadale's care. More to-morrow. Shall look for letter from you to-night.

"Dearest love from yours eternally, "Denys."

"Ah! Mr. Vohyle! I have just caught you! Quite the devoted lover!"

Denys Vohyle had no need to turn his head in order to identify the speaker; Lady Di Willoughby's sickly-sweet tones were not to be mistaken.

"You flatter me Lady Diana! Devotion, other than to myself, may hardly, I fancy, be placed to my credit."

"No? Well, I must beg leave to think otherwise, though, of course, I should not dream of even wishing to know your secret."

Denys Vohyle, who had sought the solitude of the smoke, room, that he might write his letter to Vena Holt undisturbed-scarcely knew how to meet my lady's method of attack.

"Number one" on the roll of members (of whom six had, in the course of the Tontine's seven years' existence, gone over to the majority) this was by no means her first voyage on the *Trantymere*.

Ever since the day of leaving Southampton this spinster daughter of the well-nigh impoverished Earl of Heatherfield, had pestered young Vohyle with languishing, and altogether unwelcome, attentions.

Lady Diana Willoughby was, in a way, good-looking, but of the tailor-made, masculine type.

This mixed somewhat oddly with the sigh-away style she invariably adopted when in Denys Vohyle's company.

There were very good reasons why she should keenly desire to bind Sir Hector Vohyle's heir to her chariot-wheels. He was rich, would in the near future be still more rich.

She it was who had incepted the idea of the Tontine, investing in it her last remaining capital of a few hundreds in the desperate hope of an ultimately good dividend in the shape of a wealthy husband.

For the first few days of this particular trip she had hesitated between the baronet's son and the city Crœsus. The latter, however, cold, taciturn, unapproachable, gave her no encouragement, was even rude to her when she tentatively tried her arts and wiles upon him.

Nothing remained for her, therefore, but to combine her forces in laying siege—in forlorn-hope fashion—to Denys Vohyle.

Up to the ship's arrival at Naples, she had made little or no progress in this direction, had, in fact, to acknowledge to tantamount defeat.

All along she had shrewdly suspected the existence of a prior attachment. Now, from the little that had caught her eye in Denys' letter to his sweetheart (she was by no means scrupulous in this respect) she was firmly convinced that there was a lady in the case.

That she herself was a good six years older than Denys

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Vohyle did not so much as trouble her in the least. It only made her the more energetically enterprising in her matrimonial operations.

Denys was about to reply in some sort to her last remark, when an urgent message was brought him by the steward, to the effect that Mr. Titherage had suddenly become worse and had asked for him.

Had he but thought twice he would have bundled up his papers anyhow, and not have absent-mindedly rushed out, leaving his open letter to Vena Holt on the smoke-room table, for anyone to read.

That he did so leave it, furnished Lady Di with an irresistible opportunity.

She was not slow to avail herself of it.

Snatching up the letter she deliberately read it through from beginning to end, laid it down again, and went to her own cabin, which she shared in company with Mrs. Dunlop, a widow of a certain age, but with a good bank balance.

* * * * *

"Vohyle," said Arnold Titherage, with an effort. 'I have only one thing more to say to you. A little matter, you'll think it, but then, it is connected with a bigger one."

"Well, Mr. Titherage, if it's anything in which I can be of service, you know you may command me."

"Yes, yes! I know that! I know that!" replied the sick man eagerly. "But that's just where it is. I'm not going to tell you everything."

"Why?"

"Never mind why! It's an old man's whim—an old man's whim."

"Oh, of course. I respect your wishes. You are at liberty to tell me just as much or just as little as you please."

"Good boy! Good boy! Now, listen! Didn't you let slip to me once that a certain Vena Holt was very dear to you?"

"Did I?—I suppose I did, if you say so."

"I do say so. Now, I want you, no matter what family opposition you may meet with, to go home as soon as the *Trantymere* reaches Southampton, and straightway marry your sweetheart."

"Yes, but——"

"Is there any just reason why you should not?" asked the dying millionaire.

"No, I cannot say that there is."

"Then, Denis Vohyle, do the right thing, and don't delay bringing the sunshine into Vena Holt's life. Will you promise me?"

"Promise! Of course I will. But don't worry yourself about my little affairs; I want to know if there is not something that I can do for you."

"Just this," the old man said, reaching from under the bedclothes a sealed envelope, and handing it to Denys. "Inside is my nomination for the new 'Number Nine' to succeed me, and also my holograph will.

"Take it, as soon as you arrive in England, to my solicitors, Ashton and Beale, 106, Bedford Row, they will act in both cases."

"Certainly I will do this; but you may get better, and then there will be no need for it."

"Better! No, I shall never be that! When the end comes do for me all that your kind heart would prompt you to do. Vohyle! Did you say Vena!—Vena!—it is a sweet name. You are a good man and will make her a good husband—God bless you!—Vena!—God bless you both."

These were the old millionaire's last words. Immediately after uttering them he fell back upon his pillow—dead.

* * * * *

"Oh, Mr. Vohyle, isn't it sad?" wailed Lady Di. "Of course we—that is—the *Trantymere*, is going home at once?"

"The *Trantymere*, Lady Diana, will sail for England to-night."

"Ah! Dear me! Yes! Well, I am sure you will understand, Mr. Vohyle, but Mrs. Dunlop and I have—er—arranged to go overland to Brindisi, and thence by mail to Southampton."

"I suppose, Lady Diana, you have your reason?"

"Well, neither Mrs. Dunlop nor I care to—to go back with poor, dear Mr. Titherage. I am sure you will understand."

"I cannot say, Lady Diana, that I do understand—quite; but of course you know your own business best."

"Naturally!" retorted the other, in a nettled tone; she could not but notice the young man's attitude as towards herself. Then, recollecting that there was still something that she wanted to know. "Mr. Vohyle," she said, with a bad imitation of her old sweetness of manner, "we—Mrs. Dunlop and I, that is—do so want you to tell us—well—we feel sure Mr. Titherage *must* have told *you*."

"Yes, Lady Diana, what is it? If it is anything that I can conscientiously repeat, I will do so with pleasure."

"Well, then, Mr. Vohyle—who—who is to be the new 'Number Nine'?"

"That, Lady Diana, is, I regret to say, something that I am not in a position to enlighten you upon. Mr. Titherage has made the nomination, which has been forwarded, or rather will be forwarded, to his solicitor in due course."

"Then you don't know?"

"No, Lady Diana. I am as ignorant as you are who is now 'Number Nine.'"

CHAPTER II.

Love the Leveller.

"Armadale, old chap, you are 'a sight for sair een'!" cried Denys Vohyle, as he sprang out of the Southampton train at Waterloo. "It seems ages since I saw you!"

"It's just three months."

"Seems more like three years! You're looking splendid, Ned!"

"More than I can say for you!" growled Ned Armadale, a fair young giant, hailing from the Middle Temple. "I don't think you are up to sample, young man," he went on critically. "Why, you've lost a stone, if you've lost an ounce, and you're the colour of—of brown holland!"

"Thanks, Ned, you're awfully good! But never mind my appearance; tell me, how is Vena? Of course you've seen her lately?"

"I saw her a fortnight ago, when she came to see if there was a letter from you. Since then. I—well—I've lost sight of her."

"Good Heavens! Lost sight of her! Come along! get a hansom, and let us get to your place!"

Armadale would tell his friend nothing till he had him in his third floor snuggery in Hare Court.

"Now then, Ned! What's the matter?"

"Steady, old fellow! steady! There has been a little upset, I fancy, at Selwood Court. Sir Hector and Lady Vohyle, so far as I can make out from old Hills (the butler, you know, who came up to town specially to tell me), have, within the past ten days, been informed by someone of your engagement to Vena Holt."

"Why, nobody knew of it except you and old Hills himself.'

"That's the curious part of it! I asked Hills if anybody had been to the Court—any stranger, I mean—but he said no. Obviously, therefore, this same someone has been indulging in a little scandalous correspondence. Hills is to come up again this afternoon if there is anything fresh."

"But, Vena, Ned—where is she? What has become of her?"

"That's just what I cannot tell you."

"Can't tell me! Isn't she still at the Court?"

"No; she left there at a moment's notice a week ago yesterday."

"And no one knows her destination?"

"No one. Hullo! wonder who that is! Chinks"—to the boy clerk in the outer office—"didn't you hear that knock? Open the door!"

A lady's voice was asking for Mr. Armadale.

"Why, Denys, what's the trouble?"

The barrister might well ask, for his visitor had flung himself past and over him, making headlong for the outer door.

A little shriek, a succession of endearing phrases with punctuations, and re-enter Denys Vohyle, with one arm round the shoulders of the fairest specimen of girlhood to be found in London or out of it.

They were like a couple of children, these two. She, alternately laughing and crying; while he, his face wreathed with happy smiles, could not take his eyes off her for very gladness.

"But, Denys," asked Vena, in breathless wonderment, "how is it that you have arrived without writing to tell me? I haven't had a line from you for nearly a month."

"Not heard? Why, I wrote you from Naples—twice! Once, with a cable, from Gibraltar, and again from Southampton last night."

"I have heard nothing."

"Ned, there has been some confounded trickery at work! I'm sure of it. Except the Southampton wire—which I sent myself—all my other letters and cables to Vena I intrusted to Tarver, the steward, to post and send."

"What do you think—that he has played double?"

"I remember now that, more than once, I caught him in deep confab with Lady Di Willoughby; the last time seeing money pass from her to him. I thought nothing much of it at the time, looking upon it as the mere giving and receiving a tip."

"Now?"

"Now I am positive that Tarver, at my precious lady's instance, has sold me—for a price!"

"And I've been imagining all these weeks," said Vena plaintively, "all sorts of horrible things about you! That Lady Di, Denys, must be a bad woman. What can her motive be? Perhaps it is she who has written to Sir Hector, and——"

"Why, of course!" shouted Denys, his hands clenching and unclenching, as if longing to try conclusions with somebody. "She came suddenly upon me once while I was writing to you, Vena, and being, as I believe, perfectly unscrupulous, gathered from what she could oversee that you and I, dear, were on more than friendly terms. From that to anonymous letter-writing is an easy inference."

"Look here, you two!" here interrupted Armadale, "I'm going out and will leave you to your palaver."

"All right, old chap!" said Denys, "don't shift for us. I have, I just recollect, to go as far as Bedford Row, after I have bestowed Vena somewhere till I come back. Poor old Titherage's matter, you know."

"Oh! ah! His will, and so on?"

"Yes. I promised to deliver the packet at once on my arrival in town."

A hansom soon conveyed the re-united lovers to the Chatham and Dover Hotel on the Viaduct, where Denys made arrangements for Vena to have lunch and to wait his return.

"I've something very serious to talk to you about," he whispered, as he left her.

"Serious?" she said, a trifle apprehensively.

"You shall answer that question yourself," he returned smilingly; "but I think I can promise that it will not quite break your heart."

* * * * *

Messrs. Ashton and Beale were among the oldest and most respectable legal firms of Bedford Row.

Ashton was of the old school; Beale of the new.

It was the junior and up-to-date partner whom Denys saw.

"Well, Mr. Vohyle, we've been expecting this for some days. You don't know the contents of either the will, or the paper nominating to Mr. Titherage's share in the *Trantymere* Tontine?"

"No."

"I thought not! Now, would it be convenient for you and—and—ah, yes! Miss Vena Holt, to attend at this office, at this hour, on this day week?"

"I don't quite understand!" said, Denys, in genuine astonishment. "Certainly I will come, if need be; but Miss Holt—she is exclusively a—a—friend of my own, and, as I take it, altogether outside any business connected with the late Mr. Titherage."

"Perhaps so! perhaps so! And yet, if you will so far humour me—or us, I should say—speaking for Ashton and Beale—as to bring Miss Holt with you, I—we, that is—will take it as a personal favour."

Denys left the lawyer, more bewildered than ever, but with mind firmly made up as to two courses of action. To arrange with Vena for an immediate marriage, and to discover, if possible, the rights—or wrongs— of the mischief at Selwood Court.

An hour later found the pair strolling in Kensington Gardens.

"What is your objection, dear," he was saying, "to marrying me now, and letting me face the storm—if there should be one afterwards?"

"Of course I know that you seek to do all this for my sake and comfort, Denys, dear, but what, I think, you do not clearly see is, that there is just a bare possibility of loss of friends and fortune for you, and I cannot bring myself to incur the responsibility of that."

"You? It is I who would be responsible."

"It is good of you, dear, and like you to say so; but, perhaps, I can see better than you, and to better purpose."

"You love me, Vena, don't you?" he asked her abruptly.

"It is because I do, that I hesitate to do as you wish."

"Don't hesitate, darling! Let me call upon your friend, Mrs. Deane, with whom you are staying, and make arrangements for a quiet wedding on Friday."

"You know Sir Hector and Lady Vohyle's objection," she said, ignoring his pleading. "Only a governess" is a stumbling-block your father and mother cannot get over.

"I see now that I was wrong in the first instance to consent to secrecy and practical deceit. You are certainly responsible for that, Denys."

"But in the name of fortune, child, I am old enough to act for myself!"

"Perhaps, but are you wise enough? Love may be a leveller, but society doesn't think so — and — and the governess, at whatever cost to herself, is forced to doubt the truth of the proverb."

For long she stood out against giving her consent, alluring though the temptation was, and it was only when his persistent protestations, and passionate appeals to her love for him, bore down her opposition by sheer force of a determination not to take "No" for an answer, that she bid him have his way.

"You will regret it," she said half-tearfully, but with a light in her eyes that spoke volumes.

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"Never!" he answered her, as they turned out by the little gate, into the Bayswater Road. "Never! Nor," he added, as he stood with one foot on the step of the cab, after he had put her into it, "shall *you*, dear, if it costs me my life!"

CHAPTER III.

How the *Trantymere* Tontine Dissolved Itself.

When "Mr. and Mrs. Denys Vohyle" were announced, both the partners in Ashton and Beale looked at one another across the table, and smiled meaningly.

Denys introduced his wife.

"How very odd!" remarked the junior partner. "I—that is—we almost expected this happy consummation; and I—that is—we congratulate you heartily, Mr. and Mrs. Denys Vohyle!"

While courteously acknowledging the lawyer's good wishes, Denys could not help telling himself that Mr. Beale's habit of continually expecting something was peculiar, not to say eccentric.

This constituted Mr. Beale's share in the morning's business.

"I believe, Mr. Vohyle," said the senior partner, "that you and the late Mr. Titherage were very friendly?"

"Only during the last trip," Denys replied. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Titherage and I met then for the first time, although we had been for seven years fellow members of the *Trantymere* Tontine."

"Just so! Now, before disclosing to you and to Mrs. Vohyle (here the old gentleman bent his head in old-fashioned homage in Vena's direction) the contents of Mr. Arnold Titherage's will, and—and the other communication, it will be as well, perhaps, to give you our report with regard to the little matter you placed in our hands five days ago."

This referred to inquiries Denys had requested Ashton and Beale to make on the subject of the anonymous letter to Sir Hector Vohyle, and affairs at Selwood Court generally.

Until he found out something definite, he had decided to postpone a visit to his father's house.

"In the first place," continued Mr. Ashton, "we have discovered, through the man Tarver, that Lady Diana Willoughby wrote that letter."

"I thought so," was all that Denys remarked upon this.

"Then, it seems, I am sorry to say, that Sir Hector and Lady Vohyle are alike implacable, and determined not to agree to anything you may be likely to propose in the matrimonial way. That determination (here he again bowed ceremoniously to Vena) is, however, I may say, now null and void."

"That is so," said Denys grimly.

"Thirdly, I am confirmed in my opinion, after a perusal of the *Trantymere* Tontine deed of corporation, that by leaving the ship at Naples, and travelling *via* Brindisi to England, Lady Diana Willoughby and Mrs. Dunlop contravened a vital condition provided in the said deed, and thereby rendered themselves, so far as the Tontine is concerned, to be accounted dead; and therefore out of membership and forfeit."

"Then I and the new 'Number Nine' are the sole survivors of the association?"

"Precisely."

"But who is the new member?"

"That, Mr. Vohyle, I am now about to communicate to you. Mr. Beale, be good enough to pass me over the Titherage papers."

"But, Mr. Ashton," asked Vena, "don't you think that I, as a quite uninterested party to anything Mr. Titherage may have said or done, ought to leave you gentlemen to discuss the business among yourselves."

"Pardon me, my dear madam, but you will best consult your own interests by remaining, if you will so do us the honour."

"Oh, certainly! I only imagined that, as a woman, I might possibly be in the way."

"That, my dear Mrs. Vohyle, would be impossible," returned the old gentleman, with another courtly inclination of the head.

"First, then, this nomination to a share (known as 'number nine') in the *Trantymere* Tontine. Mr. Titherage's words are few and to the point. He says, 'I hereby nominate and appoint Vena Holt, spinster, now or sometime of Selwood Court, in Horley, Surrey, as full and free owner of my "number nine" share in the association known as the *Trantymere* Tontine, with all rights and privileges appertaining to the same.' This is duly signed and witnessed, and considering that the yacht is worth, I find, something like twenty thousand pounds, I must congratulate Mrs. Vohyle and yourself in possessing so fine a property."

"Vena! You 'number nine,' I cannot understand it!"

"And I am sure I cannot," said Vena herself. "We shall find presently that it is all a mistake."

"I think not," said the old lawyer. "But that is not all. By the terms of this his last will and testament (a holograph document, I may say, but I may also state perfectly drawn up in a legal sense) 'Arnold Titherage, late of 17, Draper's Gardens, Throgmorton Street, E.C., stockbroker, gives and bequeaths everything he may die possessed of, viz., money, shares, stock, house property, and household effects, to Vena Vohyle, *née* Holt, for her sole use and benefit, all to be at her own disposal.' Mr. Titherage concludes the document by saying that he does this because he has found one man in the world who is worthy of both good fortune and a good wife. He asks you, Mr. Vohyle, to forgive his whim, that you should take your fortune at your wife's hand."

Vena steals a hand into one of her husband's.

"I think that is all," said Mr. Ashton, with a twinkle in his eye. "But when, Mr. Vohyle, you and Mrs. Vohyle have gone home, and talked this over, I shall be only too pleased to see you at an early date with regard to the winding up of Mr. Titherage's estate. I may say, however, that, at a rough estimate, it will probably come out at a little over a million sterling."

* * * * *

By agreement between the two surviving members of the *Trantymere* Tontine, the association was dissolved; the ship, renamed the *Vena*, passing into the private possession of Denys Vohyle, who contemplates, with his lovely wife, and their friend, Ned Armadale, a long Mediterranean cruise during the next few months ensuing.

There are signs of relenting at Selwood Court, but Denys is firm, that short of complete and absolute recognition of his wife, reconciliation is out of the question.

A noticeable feature soon after the departure of the *Vena* from Southampton were two toasts at the first day's dinner table.

The first, proposed by Denys, was "Arnold Titherage, in memory."

This silently acknowledged, Ned Armadale sprang to his feet, and gave "'Number Nine,' and God bless her!"

And Vena—well, she did not know whether to laugh or to cry—she only knew that she had realised the meaning of true, unalloyed happiness.

Ralph Enderby.

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MY FRIEND HARDY.

A Humorous Story of a Rivalry and How it Ended.

I OFTEN wondered then, and have often wondered since, whatever caused me to live with Hardy. A man more opposed to my tastes and opposite to me it would have been hard to find.

Hardy was a self-sufficient prig, with his smugly, respectable bank clerk air and his attempts at art which would have tried a far stronger constitution than mine. Still I lived with him, and on the whole got on with him very well. He was harmless, if annoying at times, and though many times I have (driven to desperation by his nauseating opinion of himself) looked for some weapon by which to rid myself for ever of his presence, I believe I liked him, and should no doubt have gone on doing so had it not been for an incident that occurred which cured me for ever of any friendly feeling which I might have towards him.

Hardy and I lodged in the same house. We had two bed sitting-rooms on the first floor and a common dining-room below. Hardy had the back and I had the front room. I used to feel rather strongly on this point, as Hardy's window overlooked the orchards, whereas mine faced the road and the neighbours opposite, which was not nearly so pleasant an outlook.

However, Fate sometimes arranges even lodgings, and so it fell out.

I was standing by my window engaged on some mechanical experiment, when chancing to raise my eyes, I saw framed in the ivy of the window opposite one of the most charming sights I had ever seen.

It may be needless to explain it was a feminine sight. I took the blow-pipe from my mouth and looked again. The charming vision was evidently engaged upon the task of putting on her hat.

As each hat pin stabbed its way through the mysterious edifice I became more engrossed, and when she finally put on her gloves and disappeared, I reached for my hat and prepared to follow, come what might. Luckily I recollected myself in time, and instead of behaving after the manner of Hardy (as I told myself) I craned my neck to watch her dainty little figure down the street, thereby tearing the landlady's curtain, and involving myself in a lecture and an increased bill at the end of the week.

After she had vanished I returned to my blow-pipe and wondered where she had gone, when she would return, what was her name, and who she was? To all of which questions, I naturally received no replies.

It was strange.

I had never seen her before, and yet her little, old-fashioned window so exactly faced mine that I felt it impossible that she could have lived opposite for long and I not noticed her.

I resolved to push investigations with masculine promptitude. But Mrs. Gould, the landlady, was singularly blank on the subject.

She "'adn't seen no young ladies over the way, didn't believe there wasn't none neither. Mr. and Mrs. Brown had lived there so long as she could remember, and if I didn't believe her I'd best ask Mrs. Phelps, as did the washin' for 'em nine year come next July; because it was true, and no, they never 'ad no daughters that might come 'ome from school, and it wasn't likely as two old people would 'ave young flighty girls stayin' with 'em. They wasn't that sort, they was chapel people, and didn't mix with the neighbours, as was mostly church-goin', like herself, thank Gawd, and right thinkin' folk, *if* a bit 'arsh."

This was all the information I could gather, so I returned non-plussed, to the blow-pipe once more with some wrath, thereby blowing too hard, passing the pumice stone and burning my thumb.

I said nothing of my discovery to Hardy, though. He might, with the effrontery peculiar to little men, have scraped acquaintance with my unknown charmer, thereby spoiling the whole romance, for I had begun already to look upon it as a romance.

Next day I saw her go out with her golf sticks. The same afternoon Hardy came home early from the Bank, and as we sat at tea he remarked:

"Some rather pretty girls about this place, Clifford, have you seen them?"

"No, can't say I have," I replied, deep in the *Mechanic's Journal*.

"Ah, my boy, I notice them—they notice me, I suppose that accounts for it."

I did not trouble to raise my eyes.

"People do look at a scarecrow as a rule," I replied drily.

"Ha, ha," he cackled, in his thin, conceited tones. "I've noticed they play golf a lot, too. I've joined the club."

"The dickens you have!" I responded, nettled. "What on earth for?"

"My boy, it's only right to lend yourself for the benefit of the town. Men, you know, are at a premium; therefore I consider it part of my social duty to join the club," he replied.

I glowered darkly at him. Could he by chance have discovered my divinity on the opposite side of the road? But no, his face had its bland smile (which in Hardy was a leer *I* thought), and he was evidently quite unconscious of my scrutiny.

"I should have thought it more of a kindness had you kept out of the way. Ladies have been known to faint at less hideous sights than you in a red coat."

"Why don't you join, then?"

"I hate golf," I rejoined savagely.

"H'm," said the imperturbable Hardy.

"A great lanky form like yours lopping about, especially

She "'adnt seen no young ladies over the way."

when you can't play, is apt to create an unfavourable impression. Luckily that could never fall to my share."

"Get out of my sight, Hardy, you inflated fathead, I can't keep my hands off you much longer!" I cried wrathfully.

"Don't worry, dear boy, I'm off to smoke a pipe in the garden."

"Which garden?" with renewed suspicion.

"Does it matter to you which garden?"

"Yes, it does."

"Why?"

"Mind your own business!" and I slammed out of the room and house thoroughly out of temper with everyone and everything.

Hardy a member of the golf club, and with a chance of meeting my divinity, was unbearable to me. And Hardy *did* join the club and attend it, too; but though he sickened me with descriptions of his conquests of beautiful maidens, not one of them seemed to exactly answer the description of the young lady who occupied my thoughts to the exclusion of everything else.

I used to sit and rack my brains for some method by which I might become acquainted with "Miss Violet." I called her this in my mind, because I had watched her so often search among the green beds in the garden to look for the sweet-scented blossoms, but no one of my few acquaintances seemed to know anything about the Browns, and so at the end of three weeks' ceaseless anxiety I felt I could bear it no longer, and in a burst of confidence I told Hardy. The little man heard me to the end of my recital. He nodded confidentially when I raved over her beauties, he smiled when I detailed my fruitless attempts to know her.

"Fancy you being in love—well there, I should have thought your brain never went further than smelting metals and exercising your lungs on a blow-pipe. It only shows that even the most impossible people fall in love—whereas I——"

"Now, Hardy," I put in with an ominous voice, "I didn't sit down to hear you rhapsodise about yourself. I've got a hammer in my hand remember, and I feel positive one day I shall kill you!"

"Well, well," he continued, disregarding my threat, "so this accounts for your ill-temper, I suppose. But tell me, does she care for you?"

"How do I know, blockhead! I can't get to know her."

"What! not know a girl when you live opposite to her. Why, what I should do is—"

"Yes, yes, but we're not all cads like you, Hardy. I could no more go up to that girl and speak to her than I could fly," I said.

"Dear me, how strange. I could."

"Let me catch you, and you will never know your own face again, that's all!"

"Don't worry, dear boy, my hands are quite full with the Miss Jarvises. Two of 'em, that's the worst of it."

"Yes, there isn't much of you to divide, is there, Hardy?"

"But tell me more about this girl of yours—is she really pretty? Should *I* consider her decent?"

I glared wrathfully at him.

"I shall not call upon your opinion, you may be sure of that. I only told you about the affair because I thought you might help me."

"Oh, yes, I can help you — been through a lot of these things myself, nothing easier. Want her name first, eh?"

"Yes, I suppose that would help."

"Of course. Give the postman a shilling—he'll tell you."

"D'you think he would?"

"Certain. Wait, here he comes. I'll manage this for you. Uncommon smart in these sort of things, you see!"

Hardy sprang from the room, and really I couldn't help thinking that he was rather decent on the whole. I heard an altercation at the door and then he returned. He looked a bit crestfallen.

"No good, old chap—she's married."

"She's what?" I cried horrorstruck.

"She's married—must be—postman knows me, he said no lady lives there other than Mrs. Brown, he never takes a letter for one."

"Well—perhaps she doesn't get any letters."

"What, a pretty girl, and no letters—not likely."

"Well?"

"Well, but the last month a lot of letters—most of them large business packets—have been delivered to John Humphreys, Esq., and never before."

I sank back with a groan.

"She can't possibly be married," I said, "she's only a girl. Besides, I've never seen a man come out of the house."

"That's nothing, my boy, she's married an old man, depend on it, and he's an invalid, no doubt!"

"Hardy, there are moments when to kill you would give me exquisite pleasure—leave the house and go to your infernal bank, while I have control over this hammer!" I cried, and

Hardy fled, but more in haste to catch his train than fear of my threat I am thinking. For the rest of that day I wandered about disconsolate. Married! Married! was all I kept repeating to myself. Vague dreams of suicide floated through my mind, and I worked myself into such a pitch of morbid excitement that I felt more heroic than ever did the hero of a yellow-backed novel.

I saw her out gardening as usual. I felt it a sin to look at her. Mrs. John Humphreys, indeed! Fool that I was to waste the best love of my heart on—

The mustard-brown tweed mixture inclosing Hardy, cut short my ruminations. His round goggling brown eyes goggled more than ever. His silly mouth was open, showing his irregular and bad teeth. He had an air of "abandon" about him that struck me as brutal when one considered my perturbed state.

"My boy!" he cried, with a resounding whack on my back that I resented, "my boy, it's all right!"

"What is?"

"She is!"

"What are you drivelling about, now? Talk sense if you can, or else go to the asylum!"

"I mean she's all right for you."

"I fail to grasp your meaning in the least," I replied with enforced calmness (was ever such a fool as this man?).

"She's not married!" he blurted out.

I felt instantly as if the sun had come out. Drawing Hardy's arm through mine I retired into the house. I for one was walking on air.

"How do you know?"

"By this!" and he flapped the limp sheets of a current magazine in my face.

"Look here—I was having lunch to-day, and looking through this when I came to an article—or a tale, no, I think it's a bit of poetry, and there was the signature under it 'John Humphreys.' So—now wait a minute, my lad—I looked up, and sitting near me was Joggins, the editor of the *Weekly Graspall News*—a nice chap Joggins, owes me a quid—so I said, did he know the man Humphreys, and this is what he said—of course it was a so-called trade secret, but still I, being *I*, you see——"

"Go on, Hardy, spare us yourself."

"Well, I mean he told me in confidence, that John Humphreys was a woman, a Miss Cynthia Phillips, and she was staying just now at Surbiton. In fact, he said he had had a letter from her this very morning, and her address was Elm Cottage!"

I wrung Hardy silently by the hand and passed him my cigar case. Neither did I in the least mind when he took one to smoke and placed the case in his own pocket.

"That point settled, we can now continue," he said.

"Ye-es," I replied dubiously. "But I am no nearer knowing her than I was before."

"My dear boy, let me advise you. Had a lot of experience, 'sure you. Always successful with ladies. I should write to her."

"How can I? She is not on the stage."

"No, but she is a writer. Write and say how you have admired her bit of poetry, and ask her to meet you."

"I couldn't, she'd never answer me."

"Wouldn't she—you try it!"

I remained obdurate, but at length Hardy's advice prevailed, and between us we concocted a letter which I sent, accompanied by some violets which I went to Richmond to buy.

The letter and box were delivered next morning and taken up to her room. From the safe screen of the window curtain I watched her open and read the humbly flattering note, and untie the box. She smiled when she saw the contents, and lifted them up to smell the sweetness. I felt a frantic longing to become a violet on the spot.

With a perfectly grave face she looked across at our house, and sat down to her writing-table.

I wondered was she replying?

Sure enough next morning a note was delivered to me containing the words, "Many thanks, it is very good of you,—JOHN HUMPHREYS."

Hardy, all excitement, came to my room to read the letter (a thing he had never done before), and drew aside the blinds and stood by the window talking to me quite a while. I began to think he was rather a decent sort of chap after all.

"It isn't very encouraging, is it?" I said from the bed, after I had read the formal little note twice through.

"You see she's a reserved sort of girl—no gush. I know 'em, met a lot in my time. Turn out the best in the end. To a chap like me——"

"Yes, well, that's enough."

"You're awfully impatient, Clifford. You ought to listen."

"Tell me how I can write to her again."

"Nothing easier. Write and ask her for her autograph."

"Here it is on her note."

"Oh, yes, I forgot that. Well, I should make no bones about it. Write and say how much you care for her, and how you have longed to meet her, and how your friend Hardy has——"

"That's enough, I think you are getting more than I can bear now, so you'd better go."

But all that day I turned possible letters over in my mind, until I felt I must adopt Hardy's plan (in a modified form), or die.

So I wrote very guardedly, and told her how I had watched her brilliant career, and felt what an honour it would be if I might be allowed to call her one of my friends. She replied in the third person that I could do as I liked.

These, with all the force I could summon, I flung down on Hardy.

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Next time I sent some flowers and a box of chocolates. The latter were returned without a word and Hardy ate them.

By this time I felt myself becoming emaciated and I lost interest even in my personal appearance.

Hardy, however, seemed to expand and fatten on my misery and depression. Every morning when he left the house he wore either some new tie or a buttonhole, and he swaggered down the street swinging his cane with his idiotic head in the air as if all Surbiton belonged to him. "She" used to be in the garden very often, and I have seen her smile at his retreating figure. No wonder, what with refusing my advances and looking at Hardy's antics, she must have had a poor opinion of the inmates of our house.

Then Hardy deserted me.

"I shouldn't worry, old chap," he said soothingly. "She's not having any. Come round and play ping pong at McCormack's. Got an awfully jolly niece staying there, introduce you, can't take her on myself."

"Any more of your vulgar and offensive remarks," I said loftily, "and you won't be fit to be seen in the Bank."

"Well, anyone can see with half an eye she doesn't intend to speak to you. Either your appearance or your manners have set her off, it's *quite* evident."

A loaf of bread was beside me, and the temptation was too strong. In another second it was flying through the air, and Hardy's aggressively, shiny top hat was flying in front of it.

Some men would have remonstrated. Not Hardy. He rebrushed his ruffled head-gear and bestowing on me one withering look, departed silent.

Next morning I was astounded to receive a note which said:

"Dear Sir,—I would be obliged if in future you do not try and make my acquaintance. I shall not see you if you call again, neither will bribing my servant gain you admission, I don't know who you are, or what you want. Perhaps you are a reporter. I have the greatest dislike to being interviewed. At any rate I consider your conduct of last night far from gentlemanly.—

"John Humphreys."

Whatever could it mean? I had done nothing. The note clearly implied that I had called upon her and bribed the servant to let me see her. What a horrible mistake!

I sat down at once, and informed John Humhpreys that I had not the slightest idea to what she referred. There was no answer to this, and I wondered more and more what it could mean. Hardy could throw no light on the matter either. At first he thought it a ruse to encourage me to call but that was disproved by her remark that if I came again she would not see me.

No, it was a mystery.

"I'll tell you what I'd do, Clifford. I'd write straight out, tell her your feelings and ask her to meet you. Say you will come across the road at eleven to-morrow and if she is in the garden it is a sign that you are forgiven," he said, taking a long breath.

It was a bold try, but I felt a desperate man. Some climax had to be arrived at somehow, and the sooner the worst was known the sooner the suspense would be over.

So nerving myself with a brandy and soda I sat down and wrote to her.

Next day, Hardy, more carefully dressed than ever, went later to the Bank than I had ever known him. It must have been past ten before he wished me luck and left the house.

After he had gone I felt a terrible sickening come over me. My only friend had now left me, and I had the ordeal to go through alone!

I shaved, and having struggled into a collar that would *not* button. I finally found myself ready, and the clock pointing to the quarter.

Surely if she was coming out at all she would be there by now?

The trees in our garden and those in hers made it difficult to observe a person standing in some places. However, as I reached the window I saw her door open, and she, clad in a light dress, came forth with a watering pot in her hand.

"Miss Phillips," I gasped, "forgive me."

My heart bounded and then stood still, for her face, as a rule so soft and gentle, was set with a look of determined displeasure.

She stood for a moment looking towards our house. Her face became colder, her eyes more indignant. What could it be? I shrank back, although I felt certain she could not see me, she hardly seemed looking at me either, her glance fixed

itself below my window, and her lovely face had now become transfixed with a look of utter disguest.

It was our porch, our doorstep, that was her centre of attraction!

Seizing my shaving glass I held it in such a way that a view of the doorstep was seen.

At the same instant every drop of blood in my body seemed to rush to my head, for there was Hardy in an absurd attitude, in the act of kissing his hand to her!

Everything went red before my infuriated gaze. The next moment I realised that I had opened my window and was leaning out, my two hands full of metal blow-pipes, files, hammers, and pieces of iron that I had snatched from my table. These, with all the force I could summon, I flung down on Hardy, following it up with the contents of the water-jug.

There was a shout from his direction, and a burst of laughter from the other side of the road.

Tearing downstairs five steps at a time, I flung the hall door open and kicked my prostrate friend heartily, then ran, hatless as I was, down the garden, across the road.

"Miss Phillips," I gasped, "forgive me. I can understand now your refusal. That little cad has been annoying you in my name. It has only just dawned on me."

She blushed the loveliest colour and wiped the tears of laughter from her eyes.

"I had no idea you were—you. I thought that other one was Mr. Clifford, and you were Mr. Hardy," she said.

I groaned.

"Who told you that?"

"No one, but one always raised his hat as he went by in the morning, and—you never even looked in as you passed, that I thought it must be he. Of course if I had known, perhaps—" and she stopped and blushed again.

"Perhaps you would have let me come and see you," I finished eagerly, and she did not deny it.

"I feel now," I said, "as if I could go back and burn him."

"Come in the house before you damage him any more. Poor man, I think he is punished enough. I wonder you did not kill him with all those things you threw at him just now."

But Hardy didn't die, although I had cut his head open with a chisel. It would take more than that to kill Hardy.

Die, indeed! I should think not. He asked to be best man the other day, and said if it hadn't been for him I should never have had Miss Phillips!

There comes across me an idea sometimes that Hardy is even past being put in a lunatic asylum. **Erroll Stanhope.**

FOR HER MOTHER'S SAKE.

"I AM the nurse," said a quiet voice, as the sick man opened his inquiring eyes, conscious for the first time in three weeks.

At the sound of it the shadow of a smile drifted across the rugged face on the pillow; it carried him back fifty years to the little brook singing under the murmuring pines on the old farm—and Dorothy Allen.

"You have been very ill," continued the voice. "Now that you are better you must not talk, but drink this and go to sleep." The eyes closed obediently, but the indomitable will that had changed its owner—a country lad in an obscure little village—into "Old Tom Burns," millionaire master of the great Burns steel works, strove with reawakened vigour to remember.

Presently it all came back to him. His nephew Tom had married in spite of his uncle's emphatic prohibition that woman who had nursed him in the London hospital—"a clever schemer, hoping to come into the wealth to which Tom was heir." In a rage he had refused to listen to any explanation, but had told the boy to go and starve with his adventuress, not one penny of his money should either of them ever have. He had meant that his dead brother's son should take his place as head of the company, but now——

Gradually the tired brain drifted into slumber, and "Old Tom" stood again by the side of the little brook—swollen now to an angry river—watching two figures, Tom and the woman he had married, struggling in the swift current, and lo! just as they were sinking from his sight, the woman turned her head towards him and with a cry of horror and remorse he saw the face of his unforgotten sweetheart of the long ago—Dorothy Allen.

Day by day, as his strength returned, old Tom watched the svelte figure in the blue gown moving softly about the room, her deft fingers skilfully anticipating his slightest want, her voice reminding him unceasingly of Dorothy.

"My dear," he said one day, laying his wrinkled palm across the slender hand arranging the pillow, "you remind me very much of someone I used to know. Will you tell me your name?"

"Mine?" said the nurse, suddenly flushing. "Oh, it—it is Mrs. Thomas. Who is it that I am like?"

"Someone I loved long ago," said the old man softly, "but she loved someone else. I left the little town when she married," he continued musingly, "but I have never forgotten and I see her again when I hear your voice. Who was it that brought you here to nurse me?"

"Someone who loves you asked me to come, and I wished to also because I——" she stopped abruptly.

Old Tom suddenly sat up. "No one loves me," he said hoarsely, a curious pang of self-pity for the first time in his hard, driving life tearing at his heart-strings; "I used to think Tom, my nephew, did, but he has thrown me over for a bad woman I do not know. Of whom are you speaking?"

"Are you sure she is so very bad—this woman?" said the girl with averted face. "How can you tell if you have never seen her? Perhaps, after all, she loves your nephew?"

"No, no," said the old man, laying his head softly on the pillow; "it was the money she was after, not Tom. You are a kind-hearted little girl, but you do not understand such women; they are not like you, or—Dorothy Allen."

The nurse's face grew suddenly white. "What are you saying, Mr. Burns?" she gasped. "My mother's name was Dorothy Allen before she married and my name is Dorothy too."

Old Tom suddenly caught her hands. "Yes, yes," he cried eagerly, "I see. I told you you reminded me of her. Dorothy's daughter. Tell me," with growing excitement, "who sent you to me?"

"Tom sent me; I am his wife. Oh," desperately, "I didn't mean to tell you yet, but after you got well and perhaps had learnt to like me a little. Indeed, I am not what you think. I never knew Tom was going to have any money until after I had promised to marry him, and I loved him so I couldn't give him up, even to please his uncle. Believe me, please believe me, for my mother's sake."

Slowly the arms drew her down until her face rested on the pillow beside the other, seamed and old. "Dorothy's daughter, Tom's wife," said old Tom softly. "Why didn't the young rascal have sense enough to tell me his wife's name. Is he here in the house?"

"He has been here every day since you have been ill," said the girl. "He feels very, very badly because you are angry with him."

"H'm," said the old man, with assumed sternness, though the clasp of his fingers tightened, "go and fetch him, and tell him—tell him that he did very wrong to marry without his old uncle's consent, but considering who the girl is that he has married I'll forgive him. I'd have married her mother if she would have had me, in spite of forty uncles. Don't be long—Dorothy," with a queer little choke, as the nurse, suddenly laying her soft lips on his wrinkled cheek, rose and sped swiftly from the room. **M. L. Adams.**

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OUR NEW SERIAL.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

For New Readers.

SYNOPSIS.

A belt full of diamonds has been stolen from a safe belonging to Mr. Mansfield, a wealthy banker, by Seaton Revelle (who is a friend of the banker's) and an accomplice named Benjamin Beard. Revelle accuses Alec Scarsdale, who is in love with Esther, Mr. Mansfield's daughter, of the crime, and he is sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude. Mr. Crump, late Chief-Inspector at Scotland Yard, feeling sure Scarsdale is innocent and Revelle is guilty, sets himself to prove the latter's guilt. Mr. Mansfield as fully believes in Scarsdale's guilt as does Esther in his innocence, and his friendship for Revelle increases. Revelle constantly visits the banker's house in an endeavour to win Esther's love, but so far has not prospered at all. While talking with the girl one day, Mr. Mansfield's new maid, Vance, enters the room with a tray bearing cups of coffee. No sooner does she catch sight of Revelle than she drops the tray, and, pointing to Revelle, screams: "That—that man is *my* husband!"

CHAPTER XIII.
Did She Speak Truly?

"That—that man is *my* husband!"

It was as if a bomb had suddenly crashed down into the room. Esther Seaton and Revelle both sprang to their feet. Then a moment of tense silence followed. There was no stir. The woman who had spoken the words seemed to have become petrified. Her hand was outstretched, her eyes riveted on Seaton Revelle's face—every vestige of colour had gone from it! The suddenness, the unexpectedness of it all, had temporarily numbed Esther's reasoning faculties.

It was only a matter of a second or so, but it seemed an eternity before the spell was broken. Revelle took a step forward, and fastened his eyes on the woman's bloodless face with a fixed stare, in which all the man's strength and iron will seemed concentrated. For a moment the woman's eyes met his, and braved their hard stare; then they wavered, and the spirit that was shining from them seemed to fade away, and give place to the old dull, lifeless look. She shivered, and took a backward step. Her eyes sought the ground as though the man's unblinking stare were too hard to be borne!

"My good woman," said Revelle, in a low, almost compassionate voice, "this is a huge mistake. You are taking me for someone else. Come, look at me again! Look well!"

The soft-toned light of the great shaded lamp fell upon the three figures grouped together in a dramatic tableau—upon Esther as, a graceful, beautiful figure in her simple but exquisite gown, she leant forward a little, questioning, startled wonder in her dilated eyes; upon the handsome, well-knit man in evening dress; upon the shrinking figure of the parlour maid Vance, from whose bloodless, down-bent face, a former prettiness seemed to have been washed out!

"Come, look at me again!"

With an effort the woman raised her eyes. They seemed drawn upwards in spite of herself.

Except for the pallor of his complexion and a slight, almost imperceptible, beading of perspiration on his forehead, Revelle looked quite calm and collected now. Esther's eyes wandered from one face to the other. What would Vance's answer be? Was it a case of mistaken identity? Or was some discreditable page of this man's past about to be revealed—this man from whom, for the sake of her convict lover, she cloaked her loathing under a mask of friendship, in whom she saw the cause of all her misery?

"I—yes, I must, must have made a mistake!" whispered Vance, in a low, mechanical voice. "I ask your pardon, sir. I ask your pardon!"

There was something about the low, monotonous tones that made the words sound as if they had been spoken to order.

Then Vance turned to Esther.

"Miss, will you please forgive me? I have made a mistake, but I—I've had so much trouble, so much trouble!"

With a quick movement she covered her face with her hands and started to sob piteously.

"Mr. Revelle," said Esther quickly, "I must ask you to excuse me!"

Gently taking the woman's arm, she led her from the room. As they passed from sight, Revelle drew his hand across his forehead. His expression became ghastly.

It was no case of mistaken identity. The woman whom Esther Mansfield had led from the room was his wife! He had crushed her spirit years ago; by sheer force of will he had compelled her to retract her words, deny herself; but now that she was beyond the spell of his personality, what if she should speak? She had it in her power to expose him, she could prove him to be something very different from what he seemed. If she spoke, it meant the toppling down of his carefully built plans. Even now she might be telling Esther Mansfield that the Seaton Revelle who posed as the gentleman of independent means, who was received in society, was——

John Mansfield, carrying a box of cigars, entered the room.

"Hullo," he said, "what's become of Esther?"

Then he caught sight of the broken cups on the floor.

"Why, what's happened?"

Revelle had himself under control again. The situation was desperate; but he meant to play the game of bluff to the end!

"Why, Revelle, what's the matter? You're looking upset. What's happened?"

"A most distressing business, Mr. Mansfield," he said deliberately. "I *am* upset!"

He gave an account of what had happened.

"The whole thing," he concluded, "was very startling, very piteous—the sort of thing that might have done me an incalculable amount of harm, if the poor woman had persisted in her belief, or I were not in a position to prove it absolutely impossible. You can imagine that I am feeling a little un-

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nerved. We men have a horror of this sort of thing. You know, Mr. Mansfield, that when it's a case of a woman's word against a man's, the woman is the one believed in nine cases out of ten, unless the man has outside proof to back him up. And Miss Mansfield was present. You can imagine my feelings. However, the poor creature—there is a sad tragedy somewhere in her past—acknowledged her mistake, but it was most awfully unpleasant whilst it lasted!"

He breathed out a deep sigh of relief. He was playing his part remarkably well. The banker had listened with astonishment.

"My dear Revelle," he said, with much concern, "I am most distressed—most! You're my guest, and for such a thing to have happened in my house—I'm sorry, exceedingly sorry. Of course, obviously a mistake; but I can quite realise your feelings. I wouldn't have had such a thing happen in my house for worlds, if it could have been prevented. Please accept my apologies!"

And the banker, in his anxiety to impress upon him his complete belief that it was a mistake, held out his hand.

Revelle shook it warmly, with the air of a man who appreciated.

"Thank you very much indeed! You see"—his voice faltered a little—"I was just beginning to feel that Miss Mansfield had forgiven me my share in that wretched Scarsdale affair, and I shall feel it frightfully if this business again puts me in a false light!"

"My dear Revelle, you may be quite sure that Esther will see this matter in its true light. It is so obviously a mistake."

The banker rang the bell, and told the servant who entered to clear away the *debris*, and bring fresh coffee; then, with the object of putting his guest at his ease, he turned the conversation into another channel.

"I've only just heard, Revelle, that you're an aeronaut. I'd no idea that you went in for that sort of thing till Normanhurst—I was dining at the Towers last night—told me that you were a second Santos Dumont!"

Lord Normanhurst was one of the magnates of the county. Shortly after Revelle's installation at The Firs he had called upon him—an act that was looked upon as guaranteeing the social status of the newcomer.

Revelle laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

"A shocking exaggeration," he said, "I've always been awfully keen on the subject, and can handle your ordinary balloon all right, but that's not being a Santos Dumont." He accepted one of the banker's cigars. "Normanhurst was telling me the other day that he is getting up an affair in his grounds in aid of the Church Restoration Fund, and asked me if I could help in any way. 'Pon my word, I was half joking when I suggested a balloon ascent; but he jumped at the idea, and I suppose that I've been and let myself in for it. It's been a hobby of mine for years!"

"I should say that it requires a lot of nerve!"

"I don't know about that. Some fellows take to the air as naturally as others take to water."

Revelle lighted his cigar, and smothered under a smile. He was thinking of an old, faded picture-poster that he had preserved as a memento, but showed to nobody—a picture representing a man in tights and spangles, holding on to a parachute with one hand, and in the other a lighted cigar, in the act of making a descent through mid-air. Beneath the picture, in a foreign language, the announcement that on a certain date the famous Signor Balderini would make a parachute descent.

But the tendency to smile was only momentary. Revelle glanced towards the door, and a shadow played across his features. Esther had been gone some time now. What was passing between her and—"Vance"? A preoccupied look filled his dark eyes, and John Mansfield had to repeat the remark before he received an answer. Revelle had not experienced such a strain since that day at the Old Bailey when Scarsdale had turned in the dock and pointed up to the gallery. It was a scurvy trick for Fate to play upon him—to bring back that woman into his life at such a time. By sheer strength of will, he had gained his first desperate victory, but what was happening now, what of the future?

"No," he said, with a little start, as he suddenly realised that the banker was addressing a remark to him, "the date of Normanhurst's affair has not yet been definitely settled!"

When Esther quitted the drawing-room she had led Vance to the housekeeper's room. The woman had gone with her mechanically.

"I'm so sorry, miss," she whispered, her spiritless eyes bent upon the ground, "I was wrong! Would you please ask the gentleman to forgive me! It was a dreadful thing to have done; but for a moment he seemed so like, and—and I have had so much trouble, miss!"

She was speaking like a woman under the influence of a spell. Esther pitied her from the bottom of her heart; yet there was something about her manner that was unconvincing. She might have been repeating a lesson. And the thought flashed through Esther's mind that perhaps she was not speaking the truth now, that for some reason she had repented, and was trying to screen the man!

"Won't you tell me," she said compassionately, "what your trouble has been?"

"You're very kind, miss, but no good would come of doing that! It would only be opening an old wound, miss. But if you would tell the gentleman how sorry I am, and ask him to pardon me, and if you would pardon me yourself, miss, I should be very grateful. And perhaps you would excuse me for the rest of the evening!"

"Yes, certainly!" said Esther gently.

The woman curtesyed, and, without raising her eyes, glided out of the room. Esther did not return to the drawing-room at once. All her heart and soul were concentrated upon the task of unmasking the man who had brought shame and ruin to the man she loved. Had the woman spoken the truth? Now she told herself yes, now no! She must try to find out for certain. She knew that the kindly little man who was working for her and with her was most anxious to find out as much as possible about Revelle's past life. She would have something to tell "Mr. Penworthy" when she saw him in the morning. As she returned to the drawing-room she made up her mind that, whatever her doubts might be, she would let Revelle think that she believed Vance to have made a mistake. On the threshold she gave a little shiver. Heaven only knew what it was costing her to play her part!

Vance had crept away to her bedroom at the top of the house. Sinking on to the bed, she covered her face with her hands, and, rocking to and fro, moaned softly to herself.

"Jim, Jim!" she murmured faintly. "Yes, you, Jim Balder! Why did you ever come into my life? And your look, the old look! If I'd spoken, you—you'd have killed me! Your eyes told me that!"

And she went on rocking to and fro, and moaning.

Revelle's dark eyes sought Esther's face as she entered the room. Its expression was grave, but her eyes, meeting his, reassured him.

"Mr. Revelle," she said, "I am so sorry for what has happened. Poor Vance is terribly distressed about her mistake. She has asked me to apologise to you again!"

"Miss Mansfield, please say no more about the matter. It was a mistake. It might have placed me in a very embarrassing position if the poor woman had not realised her mistake; but—well, you realise it was a mistake, and so—er—I don't mind!"

He moved across to the grand piano,

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and started to look through a pile of songs that lay upon it.

"I wish you'd sing, Miss Mansfield. Ah, here's one of my favourite songs—'When all the World is Young, Lad!' I wish you'd sing it. It would be awfully sweet of you!"

"Yes, Esther," said the banker; "do, there's a good girl!"

Esther quietly sat down at the piano. Revelle placed the music on the stand, then, resting his elbow on the instrument, stood beside.

Her sweet, telling voice gave an exquisite rendering of the pathetic words and melody. But when she came to the last four lines, the notes before her seemed to blurr:

> Creep home, and take your place there,
> The spent and maimed among;
> God grant you find one face there
> You loved when all was young!

Chokingly she finished the song. The words had galvanised into life, cruel memories, had conjured up a vision of the distant future. Her mind winged itself away to a prison cell. When the weary years had passed, would the man she loved creep home, maimed and spent? Would he find there one face he loved?

The last notes of the song quivered away into a sob. With a gasp and a little shiver she rose from the piano. Her face was the colour of death.

Revelle bit his lips. Her emotion was obvious. It had been a mistake to suggest that song. John Mansfield was looking at his daughter anxiously. She had seemed so much brighter lately; he had fancied that the wretched past was fading from her memory. Esther sought a shadowed corner of the room. An awkward, strained silence followed, broken at last by a "Thanks awfully! A sad, but beautiful song!" from Revelle. A few moments later Esther rose, and wished him good-night. Her father took her in his arms.

"Good-night, my dear child!" he said unsteadily, as he kissed her. "God bless you!"

When she reached her room, she sank down on her knees, and prayed—and wept bitterly.

Half-an-hour later, a servant announced Mr. Revelle's brougham. As Benny had remarked: "There was any amount of style about the Marquis. No half-measures; he went the whole hog!"

Once within the brougham Revelle let drop the mask that he had been wearing. He drove his fingers into the palms of his hands. His face became set and cruel. Only a short while ago he had asked himself the question—what had become of her? And now she had come back into his life, and so long as she remained in it, must be a constant threat and danger. His hands opened and shut! She was not only in the way, but horribly dangerous! She had answered to his will that night; but—he tugged savagely at his moustache.

And if anything were to happen to her after that night, the episode might be remembered, and brought up against him. He wanted her out of the way; but the question was, how to do it?

When Revelle alighted at The Firs, the question was still unanswered. As a rule he was a sound sleeper; but he lay awake most of that night, haunted by a woman's bloodless, washed-out face. It had been pretty once—pretty enough years back to fascinate Jim Balder.

The wakeful man moved restlessly in his bed.

"If only," he muttered, "she were safely under ground!"

CHAPTER XIV.

In which Crump and P.C. Jackson Hold Quiet Converse.

"Well I never! Sometimes this world seems a very small place indeed, and at other times hopelessly, depressingly vast. Fancy meeting my old acquaintance, Tomlinson, again! And so, under the name of Railton, he has gone back to his old occupation of gentleman's gentleman—is acting in that capacity to Seaton Revelle. The Firs is indeed housing a pretty trio of rascals at the present time! Seaton Revelle, that's the hardest nut to crack. I can trace him back ten years—then there's a blank. It's not a good history, not exactly a bad history—what I should call a shaky history. No one seems to know anything definite about his financial resources. H'm, if I could only get a clue to how those stolen diamonds were disposed of! Everything, I think, will ultimately depend on that. The numbers of the banknotes, unfortunately, were not taken."

It was evening, the same evening that Seaton Revelle dined at Mr. Mansfield's, and Crump, a briar pipe between his lips, was leaning over some rustic railings, deep in reflection. A homely cottage formed a background. He had engaged a couple of rooms at Woodbine cottage in the name of Penworthy, explaining that he was engaged to alter and improve Mr. Mansfield's garden, a work of some magnitude. The cottage stood not far from the reservoir, and was some distance from the village. Crump avoided the village as much as possible. Mrs. Cobb, his landlady, was charmed with her lodger. Crump invariably won the hearts of old ladies.

Could one have obtained a glance at certain rough notes of his, one would have realised what a tremendous amount of work he had done since Scarsdale's conviction and sentence at the Old Bailey—work of the drudging, uninteresting order, disheartening work! For, parallel with the laborious task of ferreting out Revelle's past life and vainly endeavouring to get on the track of Benjamin Beard, he had been trying to solve the mystery of what had become of the stolen notes and diamonds. If Scarsdale's innocence were to be proved, someone else's guilt must be proved up to the hilt. And during those weary months when Esther was abroad, Crump had been ferreting among diamond dealers, brokers, pawnbrokers, certain notorious receivers of stolen stuff, not only in England but on the Continent.

And now, as the little man leant over the rustic railings, he told himself that, so far as the stolen stuff was concerned, he was no "forrarder" than when he started; but he was possessed of an indomitable patience, and refused to allow himself to be disheartened.

"But," he said to himself, "in other respects I am a leetle forrarder. The birds have come to roost. I shall have opportunities, hitherto unavailable, of personal observation, and—of course this is a conclusion on my part—I can't help thinking that this gathering together under the same roof of the Tinker, my old acquaintance Tomlinson, and Revelle—I do so want to find out more about *him*—forebodes a development of some kind. I shouldn't be surprised if it took the shape——"

The little man checked himself, and shook his head sorrowfully. He had only just been in time to prevent himself jumping at a tremendous conclusion.

Then his kindly face beamed all over as he felt a tug at his coat-tails. He turned round with a chuckle. A little girl of five years old, her head a mass of sunny curls—natural ones, not produced by the twirling of mother's fingers or the nightly insertion of curl-papers, reached up a fat, little hand to him.

"Grandmother sent me to bring you to supper!" she said.

"Then, sweetheart," said the little man, picking her up and placing her on his shoulder, "to supper you and I shall go!"

"But give us a ride round the garden first, please!" whispered the mite.

Crump did; and it was a question which of the two enjoyed the scamper most, the little girl or the veteran detective, hero of a hundred crimes. Nor was he content with that. When, puffing a little, he entered the cottage, he sought out Mrs.

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Cobb, and asked permission, as it was not really late, for Pollie to keep him company over his supper. He obtained permission.

And it was a pretty sight—the little, sunny-haired girl, seated on the arm of the chair, nestling close to the kindly-faced old man. When Mrs. Cobb entered to fetch Pollie away Crump's supper was untouched. Pollie's eyes were sparkling with delight.

"And who," Crump was saying, "do you think the beggar was?"

"The handsome Prince?" asked Pollie excitedly.

Mrs. Cobb's entrance had been unnoticed.

"Right!" cried Crump. "And who do you think the lonely girl, who minded the geese, was?"

"The beautiful Princess!"

"Right again!" chuckled Crump, as though the child had solved a most difficult problem. "And they were married and always loved one another, and lived ever so happily ever after. And now my story's ended, and—— Hullo, here's grandmamma come to fetch you to bed!"

It was only after Pollie, very much against her will, had been carried away that Crump suddenly remembered that he had entered the room with the intention of eating supper, not telling fairy tales.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, with a sigh. "It only seems yesterday that Freddie and Katie were sitting on my knees, and I was telling them that same story. And that reminds me, Freddie's on night-duty; but I shall have that fine young fellow, Tom Jackson, round here presently. Both of 'em fine lads, wholesome-minded, manly fellows. They are going to be a great help to me!"

Crump was an extraordinarily good judge of character. Freddie, otherwise P.C. Wilton Z 105, he had known almost from the day of his birth; Tom Jackson, his chum, the stalwart young constable on whose broad back Esther had written the note that had reached Scarsdale at Warham police-station, he had seen but little of, but quite enough to realise his sterling worth. Jackson might not be particularly brilliant, but he possessed courage, determination, and chivalry. He was not only devoted to Alec Scarsdale, the man who had saved him in the hour of his temptation, but he worshipped the very ground that Esther Mansfield trod upon. From the very first he had protested that Scarsdale was innocent. He had made up his mind to do all that lay in his power for him; but the ordinary constable has not much time to devote to private investigation. When, however, Revelle settled down at The Firs, Jackson told himself that greater opportunities were about to be afforded him, and he had made up his mind to keep his eyes very widely open, when Crump had appeared on the scene. When the veteran detective had taken both Fred Wilton and himself completely into his confidence, Tom Jackson's pride and delight may be more easily imagined than described.

Crump had just finished his supper when the young constable, in *mufti*, stepped into the low-roofed room. He had, it is almost needless to say, asked Mrs. Cobb if Mr. Penworthy—not Mr. Crump—were in.

"Sit down, my lad, light your pipe, and make yourself comfortable!"

Crump waved a hand to a chair.

"I'm afraid," said Jackson, "that I haven't much news for you, except that since Lord Normanhurst has called at The Firs most of the big swells round have followed suit, and there's a concert coming off in the schoolroom in aid of the Church Restoration Fund, and Mr. Faversham's down in the programme to sing comic songs!"

Crump's little eyes twinkled at this.

"Well I'm blessed!" he said, half-aloud, "what a delightful piece of impudence!"

"And," went on Tom, "there's some talk about a big affair in Lord Normanhurst's grounds—a sort of fête and gala. The date's not fixed yet; but Lord Normanhurst's secretary was round at the station this afternoon, making inquiries as to the number of men that could be spared for special duty in the grounds, and, this is what I'm coming to, Mr. Crump, he let drop something about a balloon ascent being made by Mr. Seaton Revelle!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Crump, "a balloon ascent. Dear me! You surprise me, Tom! Revelle an aeronaut? H'm, h'm! Now, I wonder where he acquired 'his experience'?"

The wrinkles round his little eyes puckered up. Then he shook a finger at Jackson.

"Tom, my lad, don't get into the way of using the name Crump, even in private—it might slip out in public. Penworthy, if you please. As it is, you know, I am not altogether comfortable. It's nearly a year ago, but that young rascal Freddie, gave me away in the bar of the Crown and Cushion. It would be a very serious thing if my real identity were to come out. It would put certain gentlemen on their guard. I am on rather thin ice, my dear lad. And I have to bear in mind that my old acquaintance, Tomlinson, is in the neighbourhood—a very sly fellow, a shocking coward, but sharp, and quick-sighted!"

He paused for a moment.

"You see, Tom, if we chose we could at this present moment make it very uncomfortable indeed for that little lot at The Firs. A notification to Lord Normanhurst, for instance, that Mr. Revelle's friend, who is about to sing comic songs in aid of the Church Restoration Fund, is a gentleman who has undergone five years' penal servitude, and was formerly known among the criminal fraternity as the Tinker, and that Mr. Revelle's valet is also an ex-convict—well, I fancy that it would result in a general clearance from The Firs! But that is not our game, Tom. We want to get proof of Alec Scarsdale's innocence!"

"Aye, that's it!"

"Therefore, instead of exposing these rascals at The Firs, our best policy is to connive at their continuance there, and devoutly hope that, for the present, at least, exposure will come from no extraneous quarter. If only they are given rope enough, I am hoping that, sooner or later, they will hang themselves. I can't help thinking that before long——"

The little man stopped abruptly.

"What?" questioned Jackson eagerly.

"No, Tom, no!" Crump shook his head sorrowfully. "It is dangerous to jump at conclusions. It has been the cause of many failures on my part. Take an old fellow's advice: if you wish to succeed in your calling, don't, don't jump at conclusions!"

And from the heavy sigh that the little man heaved, one might have fancied that he himself had failed ignominiously.

The stalwart young constable fidgeted a little on his chair.

"Well, Tom, what is it you want to say?"

"You'll be seeing Miss Mansfield to-morrow?" he stammered, the colour deepening on his honest face.

"Yes. I shall be at work on that front garden first thing in the morning," chuckled Crump, "and though I say it that shouldn't, I am making a very tidy job of it!"

Jackson drew a letter from his pocket.

"I don't know whether I've done wrong," he said, still with a tendency to stammer, "but, well, I took the liberty of writing to Mr. Scarsdale—knowing that the prison authorities would overhaul the letter first, I couldn't say anything confidential—but I just told him that me and others were always thinking of him, and I've got

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this letter back from him to-night. It's formal and guarded for the same reason as mine was, but it's cheerful—and, well, I was thinking that perhaps"—the colour deepened on his face, the stammer became more accentuated—"perhaps it would cheer up Miss—Miss Esther to see it. And when you see her, perhaps you'd give it to her, and you might say that Tom Jackson doesn't want it back!"

He handed Crump a blue, government-stamped envelope. Crump took it, rose up, and shook Jackson's hand warmly.

"Good lad!" he said with considerable emotion, "good lad!"

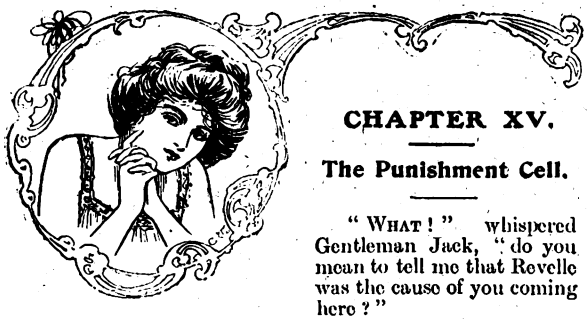
In his days of active service, Crump had been famous for his unorthodox behaviour; in his retirement he had retained his reputation by forming a close friendship with a certain one-time notorious malefactor, one Cully Scott, alias the Smasher; now he was about to act as an intermediary between a convict sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude and the girl he loved! He was indeed hopelessly unorthodox!

After some further conversation, Jackson prepared to leave.

"I'm afraid," he said, "that I haven't been much of a help so far; but I'm going to keep my eyes open!"

Crump patted him on the back.

"My dear lad, Rome wasn't built in a day! And, by the way, see if you can get on speaking terms with Railton. Give my love to Freddie, and tell him he might also try to make Railton's acquaintance!"



CHAPTER XV.

The Punishment Cell.

"WHAT!" whispered Gentleman Jack, "do you mean to tell me that Revelle was the cause of you coming here?"

Alec Scarsdale sent his pick into the quarry-bed with a splintering crash.

"Yes!"

A warder sauntered up. The two convicts plied their picks in silence. Then, when the man had passed away again, Scarsdale—he had learnt the trick of speaking without moving his lips—told his story to the convict beside him.

"The scoundrel!" whispered Gentleman Jack. "It's clear enough to me. I know Revelle to my cost. My God! if I could only get my fingers round his throat!"

Scarsdale's pick again crashed into the bed.

"Crofton," he said, in a low, strained voice, addressing him by his proper name, "I want you to tell me all you know about—about Revelle!"

But it was not possible that afternoon. At that moment the distant, deep-toned prison bell clanged out the recall.

"Pile up tools—jackets on—fall in—file up!"

Scarsdale had plenty of food for reflection when, after having placed the tin pint, the wooden platter, the broom, and the zinc mug for water outside his door, he was alone in his cell. While awaiting his supper, he did not feel inclined to read the books that were allowed him, but sat on his three-legged stool, wrapped in thought. After supper had been brought round and he had finished his pint of cocoa and eight ounce loaf, he remembered that it was Tuesday, the day on which the weekly search was made. He was busily engaged in polishing his tins, when the door was flung open. Pettigrew and another warder stood inside.

"Now, then," cried Pettigrew, "look sharp, will you. I don't want to be kept here all night. Unroll your bedding!"

The man was a bully. He loved to hector it over his charges. He was also anxious for promotion. And he had planned something that he fancied would call the Governor's attention to what a zealous, careful officer he was!

Without speaking, Scarsdale obeyed. As he unrolled the sheets and blankets, something fell from them with a metallic crash on to the slate flooring. It was a steel wedge, about a foot in length, and similar to those used in the quarries. With a little cry of astonishment Scarsdale started back. How had it come to be concealed there?

With a malignant gleam of triumph in his eyes, Pettigrew, who had been piling up the various articles of the cell in a confused heap, darted forward and picked up the wedge. The other warder still stood outside.

"You rascal," cried Pettigrew, brandishing the instrument in his face, "where did you get this from? Sneaked it from the quarries, I suppose. And what for? To work your way out of the cell, or smash my head in. I'll run you in for this. I'll make it hot for you!"

For a moment Scarsdale was too staggered to make reply. The presence of the wedge among the bedding was absolutely incomprehensible to him. No man, however much he might contemplate escape, would attempt it from his cell. His only chance was in the open. Then, like a flash of light, a strange thought coursed through his brain. Had that wedge been purposely concealed there with the object of getting him into trouble? His heart throbbed with mad indignation at the thought. Only one man would have done it. His hands closed involuntarily as he took a step towards Pettigrew.

"I know nothing about it," he said, under his breath; "it was not there this morning. It must have been put there while I was at work in the quarry."

"Put there! What d'ye mean?" roared Pettigrew. "Who'd want to put it there? Don't give me any of your lies. You'll go before the Governor to-morrow morning for this."

Scarsdale knew what that meant—the punishment cell, loss of marks, and bread-and-water diet. He dug his nails deep into the palms of his hands in a fierce endeavour to control himself. But a dangerous look shone from his flashing grey eyes. So far he had borne the man's tyranny without a murmur; he breathed a brief prayer that he might not forget himself now. There was a time when, had any man spoken to him as Pettigrew spoke to him, he would have knocked him down; but he was a free man then, not a felon undergoing sixteen years' penal servitude, when good conduct meant remission of time!

"Here, don't stand staring at me like that; perhaps you've got something else stowed away about you. Strip, d'ye hear?"

Scarsdale did not stir, but a curious shiver passed over him.

"I tell you," he said, speaking as if he had not heard the last remark, "that I know nothing of that steel bar. It has been put there out of spite."

"Don't argue," cried Pettigrew, fiercely. "Are you going to strip, or am I going to make you?"

When a man is ordered to strip for searching purposes, it is no case of half measures, though sometimes a humane warder will allow the prisoner to retain some of his clothes, and content himself with "rubbing him down"—that is to say, passing his hands over his body.

Scarsdale's blood was boiling. The ignominy of being thus addressed burnt into his soul like a fiery brand. Again the hot desire to fling himself upon the brute who tyrannised over him surged into his brain. He had always been of an impetuous, fiery disposition. What it cost him to keep himself under was only known to himself. He bit his lips till the blood came; then mechanically removed his coat and waistcoat, and dropped them on the floor.

"Hurry up, will you! Off with the rest of 'em. There are no ladies about, confound you! You needn't be bashful!"

Perhaps the sneering look on the man's face was harder to bear than his words.

Scarsdale drew off his coarse flannel shirt. As he stood there stripped to the waist, he looked a picture of graceful strength and manhood, a striking contrast to the Herculean, bull-necked warder who was viciously eyeing him. There was not an ounce of superfluous flesh upon him. The muscles of

arm and torso stood out firm and hard as iron. Every line suggested nervous strength.

Pettigrew was evidently not quite satisfied. The next moment he gave utterance to a coarse and horribly brutal jest. We will not sully these pages by repeating it. He had evidently studied the back files of some newspaper, and was conversant with all the details of Scarsdale's case.

The name of Esther Mansfield had passed his lips!

The slight flush that indignation had conjured up on Scarsdale's brow died suddenly away. He went livid. His body quivered as if a knife had been driven into his flesh.

It was too much. Anything but that! The man before him had profaned the name of the woman he loved, whose image was with him day and night, who represented to him all that was pure and good and beautiful—his ideal! Insult, tyranny to himself he might have borne, but not that!

With a wild, hoarse cry Scarsdale hurled himself upon the warder. But the burly giant was no mean antagonist.

Avoiding the terrible blow aimed at him, Pettigrew flung his arms around him with the grip of a bear, and by sheer weight bore him backwards against the half-open cell door. It closed to with a snap, shutting out the warder outside. The two men, convict and warder, were alone, locked in one another's arms. Then Scarsdale wrenched himself free. Pettigrew staggered back; then came again to meet an awful blow, that, catching him under the jaw, lifted him off his feet and sent him crashing to the floor, where he lay motionless as a dead man.

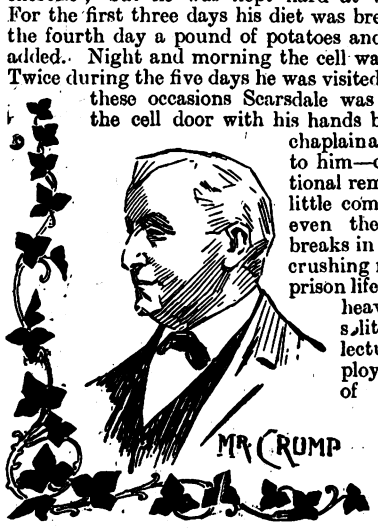
When the cell door was flung open, and warders rushed in, they found Scarsdale standing over the prostrate Pettigrew. His eyes were flashing wildly; his chest heaving with passionate emotion.

"He's got what he deserved," he hissed, between his clenched teeth; then he broke out into a ghastly laugh, "all right, I don't want to fight you, you can take me, do what you like with me. But he," he pointed to the prostrate figure, "got what he deserved!"

"What's all this about?" cried a principal warder, as he hurried into the cell. The matter was quickly explained. A few moments later Scarsdale was being led away under a strong escort of warders to the punishment cells—to be brought brought up before the Governor on the morrow.

When, on the following morning, Scarsdale was charged with assault and concealing an implement in his cell, the offence seemed so serious that the Governor postponed sentence till the arrival of the prison visiting director.

Scarsdale had five days to wait before his arrival—five days that were spent in solitary confinement in the punishment-cell. Books were denied him, and he was not allowed to take exercise; but he was kept hard at work picking oakum. For the first three days his diet was bread and water, but on the fourth day a pound of potatoes and a pint of gruel were added. Night and morning the cell was rigorously searched. Twice during the five days he was visited by the chaplain. On these occasions Scarsdale was ordered to stand at the cell door with his hands behind him, while the chaplain addressed a few remarks to him—commonplace, conventional remarks, that carried but little comfort with them; yet even they were welcome as breaks in the monotonous, soul-crushing routine. The ordinary prison life had pressed upon him heavily enough; but the solitude, the low, unintellectual labour he was employed upon, the absence of sufficient light, the want of exercise, the miserable diet, made the present existence a thousand times more unendurable. Even the privilege of attending chapel was denied him, and he longed for the sound of human voices. But his longing was in some measure gratified. As on the Sunday he paced restlessly up and down the square brick cell, the distant sound of many voices singing in unison, and the words, dimly distinct, of the old hymn he knew so well and associated with boyhood's days, reached his ears:



Oh, God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come.

He stood still to listen. The hard, defiant look that his face had lately worn softened, and the muscles about his mouth twitched. His heart was throbbing as if it would burst. The strong words seemed to bear a message of hope to him, to illumine the darkness of his soul.

When, a few minutes later, the warder on duty peered through the spy-hole in the door, Convict 35, his discoloured hands clasped together, his head bent forward, knelt in prayer on the stone floor.

"Oh, God! For freedom!"

CHAPTER XVI.

In the Nick of Time!

The windows of Esther's bedroom looked out upon the front garden. The first grey light of dawn found her wide-awake, and welcoming it. Thoughts had crowded unceasingly through her brain during the sleepless night. Human beings had peopled the darkness. Sometimes it had been Alec, haggard and wan, dressed as, once, at a railway station, she had seen a string of handcuffed men dressed; then it had been Vance, pale, spiritless, looking like a woman whose soul had been beaten out of her body; then it had been Revelle, handsome, pale, deliberate; then it had been a homely little man who had seemed to nod at her smilingly, and bid her be of good cheer.

But the dawn had broken at last. She rose from her bed, and peeped out of the window. All was grey and still. She shivered. The same grey light must be stealing over the cruel prison that held the man she loved. Nearly a year, and never a word from him! She knew why! Her father had been in communication with the prison authorities. He had done so, believing that he was doing what was right and best for his child's sake. He had stated that any communication from the convict Scarsdale to his daughter would only cause distress, and requested those in power to use their authority.

Oh, but it was all hard to bear!

The grey, dull light was beginning to warm with a pale saffron hue. Esther let fall the curtain, and donned her clothes. It was no uncommon thing now for her to be up and out at sunrise. No soul was stirring in the house as she passed out of her room.

She made her way down to a side-door.

On reaching it, she gave vent to a little exclamation of surprise!

It was neither locked nor bolted! The servants must have forgotten it the night before. She would mention the fact to Mrs. Tilley.

The cool morning breeze, beating upon her fevered forehead, seemed to bear with it a spirit of calm. It was not a far cry to the wood-girt reservoir, with its memories bittersweet. And, for all its sadness, she loved the spot where Alec Scarsdale had whispered of his love!

A glimpse of Woodbine cottage through the trees brought

Crump to mind. She would be seeing him later in the morning, and there would be much to tell him.

She was hungry for that moment to come. Would he think, as she had thought, that Vance had made no mistake?

Her eyes brightened as she neared the rustic railings in front of the cottage. She would not have so long to wait as she had fancied. She had caught a glimpse of a little man, hatless, his back turned towards her. He was bending over a rose-tree, evidently inhaling the perfume of the roses. He looked round at the sound of her footsteps.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Crump. "Miss Mansfield! Well, I never! But this is early for a morning walk. Ah, but perhaps you're like me—think the early morning the most beautiful part of the day!"

He stepped out into the road and shook her very heartily by the hand.

"If you're going for a walk may I have the privilege of accompanying you?"

Esther's hand tightened round his.

"Yes, please do! I've something which I think is very important to tell you!"

"Ah, indeed! If you'll excuse me one minute, I'll creep in and get my hat. I'm the only one up at present. I also have something to tell you—or, rather, I should say, give you. But I think I won't give it you till after our little walk!"

Crump referred to the letter that Tom Jackson had intrusted to him the evening before, and his innate sense of delicacy told him that it would be best to give it her at parting. She would like to be alone when she read it! And Esther, little dreaming what it was he had to give her, was content to wait.

"And so," said the little man, on his return from the cottage, wearing a hat, "you have something very important to tell me?"

"Yes! About something that happened last night!"

Crump pursed up his lips, ready to listen. They were moving along the road now towards the entrance to the bridle-path that led through to the reservoir. Then Esther told him what had happened after dinner in the drawing-room on the previous evening; of Vance; of those startling words: "That—that man is my husband!" Of what followed, and Vance's curious reticence on the matter.

Crump's little eyes beamed brightly, and the wrinkles round them seemed to become multiplied; but he listened without interrupting. Esther was still talking when they reached the bridle-path. Almost unconsciously she turned into it.

"What do you think?" she whispered in a low voice, strained with excitement. "Do you think that it was no mistake, that Vance was afraid, regretted what she had done, was perhaps cowed?"

Crump's expression told of a brown study.

"At present," he said, more to himself than to Esther, "I don't feel in a position to make a definite statement, one way or the other; but it is very remarkable! I should like very much to jump at a conclusion; but I will not allow myself—but I shall be very anxious to see this poor woman, Vance. A woman, you say, who looks as if her spirit had been completely broken?"

"Yes!"

"Ah! I shall be interested, very interested to——"

He stopped abruptly. Esther had suddenly clutched his arm, and was pointing ahead with her free hand! They had reached a turn in the path from which the margin of the reservoir was visible.

"Look!" she whispered. "What's that woman going to do?" *(To be continued.)*

Wife: "My dear, what is the subject of to-morrow's sermon?" Minister: "The Frivolities of Modern Dress." Wife: "You must postpone it. I want to wear my new gown to-morrow for the first time."

Your Editor Chats.

Before you arrive at this page, you will, of course, have noticed that at last I have been able to give you No. 1 of the "Confessions of Cynthia." And having read the first instalment you will easily understand how it was that we were obliged to hold the confessions back, till certain legal proceedings were over, for the exposure is as complete as it is astounding. And now I want to ask a small favour of my readers. After you have read your *Short Stories* you may, of course, like to keep the copy. On the other hand, you may not be particular about doing so. If you are not, please do not throw the copy away, but hand it on to some friend whom you know is not a reader. Such an arrangement is really pleasant all round, for your friend will be pleased with the paper, and you will be pleased that he is pleased, and we shall be pleased that you both are pleased. And after all it is not much trouble to you to hand your copy along, and it may do a lot of good.

I should like to say here that I shall always be glad to receive letters from my subscribers expressing views as to the matter published in *Short Stories*. And, needless to say, if any suggestions offered appeal to me as being suitable to adopt, I shall present a little gift to the reader who suggested it.

You will see that I have announced another competition this week. It is by no means a difficult one, and I am hoping for as good, if not a better response to this as to last week's announcement. I may also say that I have a big surprise in store for readers in the shape of a new scheme. As, however, arrangements for working it are not quite complete, I cannot do more at present than ask my readers to keep a look out for the first announcement.

Result of the River Competition.

The first prise of £10 has been divided equally amongst the three competitors who sent correct lists of the rivers:

Miss Lucy White, 162 Camberwell New Road, S.E.
Miss Florence White, 162 Camberwell New Road, S.E.
A. Chester, 15 Granby Buildings, Vauxhall, S.E.

The second to sixth prizes have been added together and divided equally amongst those with only one mistake:

F. Chester, 15 Granby Buildings, Vauxhall, S.E.; W. Stevens, 3 Campbell Street, Greenock; J. Adam, 9 Parkhurst Road, Bowes Park, N.; Miss F. White, 162 Camberwell New Road, S.E.; Mrs. Barnes, 2 Vauxhall Walk, Lambeth; R. Barnes, 37 Princes Road, Kennington; H. Barnes, 2 Vauxhall Walk, Lambeth; S. White, 162 Camberwell New Road, S.E.; W. Chester, 15 Granby Buildings, Vauxhall, S.E.; Miss L. White, 162 Camberwell New Road.

Solution: 1, Aire or Ayr; 2, Tees; 3, Bann; 4, Cam; 5, Tweed; 6, Dart; 7, Wye; 8, Exe; 9, Eden; 10, Dove; 11, Barrow; 12, Forth; 13, Tyne; 14, Tamar; 15, Colne; 16, Camel; 17, Conway; 18, Don.; 19, Beame; 20, Test; 21, Foyle; 22, Thames; 23, Spokes Mill; 24, Washford; 25, Blackwater; 26, Teith; 27, Costar or Costa; 28, Lee or Lea; 29, Ewe; 30, Hull; 31, Wear; 32, Evenlode; 33, Awa; 34, Soar; 35, Bandon; 36, Whiteadder; 37, Earn or Erne; 38, Mole; 39, Trim; 40, Dee; 41, Lyon; 42, Oke or Oak; 43, Tame; 44, Bran; 45, Suck; 46, Tawe; 47, Wey; 48, Windrush; 49, Till; 50, Cart; 51, Brent or Brant; 52, Sow; 53, Bream; 54, Hayle; 55, Berry Water; 56, Bush; 57, Beel; 58, Idle; 59, Otter; 60, Almond.

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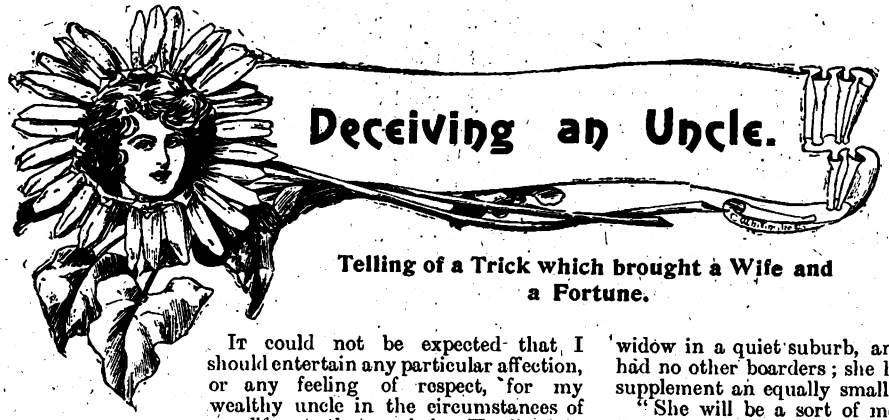

Deceiving an Uncle.

Telling of a Trick which brought a Wife and a Fortune.

It could not be expected that I should entertain any particular affection, or any feeling of respect, for my wealthy uncle in the circumstances of my life at that period. He lived in Italy for the benefit of his health, and he had not been to England for twenty years; consequently, he had not seen me since I was a child, and he was quite unknown to me. Then, he had not worried himself about me when my father died; he was too ill to attend the funeral, and he took it for granted that I was well provided for, which is a very convenient method of shaking one's self free from relatives who might require assistance. He limited his solicitude on my behalf to one letter a year, sent for what he believed was my birthday, but which was three months out of date; he did not send a present, but restricted his affection to a few words of congratulation.

I was left with a small share in a large business, which was sufficient to maintain and educate me; it was understood that, on reaching the age of twenty-one, I should enter the firm and take up the position of junior partner, so I felt that I owed nothing to my uncle, and had nothing to expect from him.

It was just at that time that I received the usual annual epistle, but on that occasion I was astonished to find that the letter was rather longer than usual, and that it contained a sentence referring to possible matrimonial intentions on my part. My uncle informed me that I was probably thinking of getting married, and if I was not so minded, I ought to be; that he knew by experience that a bachelor's life was not the best and meant to see that I did not fall into the same error as he; and that I would please to write and let him know how matters stood. The letter concluded with a vague hint that he might do something for me if I married.

I was at first annoyed, because it seemed like cheek on his part, seeing that he had done nothing for me, and that I was getting on tolerably well without the "something" which he thought of doing. My annoyance turned to amusement, however, and I resolved to have a game with the old chap. I wrote to him, telling him that I had anticipated his question by a year, and was the father of a bouncing baby boy, just arrived on this planet.

I chuckled as I dropped that letter into the pillar-box; it did not occur to me that I was telling a big fib; I regarded it as a joke. I forgot all about the matter till a week later, when I received a baby's spoon and mug, all of gold, and a letter of congratulation, and a remark to the effect that I ought to have waited till I was twenty-one before marrying. I then remembered that twenty was rather young for marriage.

I felt rather guilty as I wrote the letter of thanks, but I comforted myself with the reflection that I should never see the old fellow, who would fall back into the one-epistle-a-year custom. But I couldn't keep that spoon and mug! Gracious, suppose any of the fellows were to find out that I had such an outfit among my belongings! Moreover, I was rather hard up then, having run through my quarterly allowance quickly; so I sneaked off to a pawnbroker in another part and turned that spoon and mug into sovereigns.

About nine months later, misfortune overtook me in the form of failure of the firm in which my father's money was invested, and I saw myself not only without money, but also without a situation. In the end, I had to accept a clerkship in the establishment of one of our firm's creditors.

This drop in the world necessitated a change in my mode of living, and I immediately looked round for less pretentious lodgings. I inserted an advertisement and received a lot of replies, but the only one that appealed to me in my somewhat dejected frame of mind, was that of a widow in a quiet suburb, and I decided to go there. She had no other boarders; she had a small house and wished to supplement an equally small income by taking in a boarder.

"She will be a sort of mother to me," I said to myself. "I want someone like that."

I could give good references, and the matter was practically settled without an interview, for I was too sad to care much about the kind of lodging; but I just called on her before actually removing, and was surprised to find that the widow was a young woman about a year older than myself. Quite an attractive woman, was Mrs. Hanbury.

While I was in the midst of packing my things, some to be taken to my new lodgings and others to be sold, a letter was placed in my hand.

"Italian stamp!" I growled, rather irritably. "Oh, yes! The usual birthday effusion! I knew he would fall back into that custom. He hasn't written to me since that spoon and mug affair, so that proves I'm right!"

It did not strike me that it was not quite a year since the last birthday communication. I was half inclined to tear it up without opening it, but finally thrust it into the pocket of my knockabout jacket, unopened, with other papers. "I'll read it later," I muttered.

I was soon comfortable in my new home, and Mrs. Hanbury was very pleasant. I didn't like the idea of a baby in the house especially when it cried in the middle of the night, but one gets accustomed to everything, and one Saturday afternoon I actually volunteered to look after the little chap, as he lay asleep in the cradle, while his mother went out shopping.

"Hallo! Why, I never opened that letter of Uncle Tom's!" I exclaimed, as the remembrance of it flashed across me. "It's a month old. I stuffed it in this pocket, didn't I? Yes, here it is. I wish the old chap would do something for me, for I don't seem to get on very well!"

I sighed heavily as I admitted the fact. I had not been brought up for clerking. I wasn't much good at it, and I had no aptitude for it. I stood a very good chance of getting the sack. I couldn't entirely blame myself; I knew of several occupations that would suit me better, but where could I get the chance?

I read the letter and gasped. Uncle Tom was coming to London, and wanted to see my wife and baby. "I don't like the foggy place," he wrote, "but it won't hurt me at this time of the year. I told you I would do something for you and your family if you married, and I'm coming to do it! I shall be in London by the tenth of next month, and will call on you at once to see that you are acting as the son of your father, and my nephew, should act!"

And this was the eleventh! I hadn't told him of the change of fortune and address, but he would soon hear of that from my last lodgings and he would come on here. The old man seemed to be awaking to the fact that he had a duty to perform towards me, and he would relieve me from my present position. I jumped up with a shout, then sank back with a cry of despair. That little trick of mine would spoil all my chances, for he would never forgive me for deceiving him!

A tremendous ring at the bell; a ring that can only be given by two people—the beggar and the man who thinks that the house belongs to him. I guessed at once that it was my uncle at the door.

I glared wildly about, as if seeking some way out of the dilemma; I thought of bolting over the back wall, but that appeared a poor way out. Then an idea took possession of me and, without further reflection, I decided to adopt it. Another furious ring sent me hurrying to the front door.

"My dear uncle!" I cried, seizing his hand and shaking it violently. I recognised him by his resemblance to an old portrait. "But, please, you mustn't ring so hard or you will wake the cherub."

His angry expression faded away.

"I'm very sorry, Bob!" he said apologetically. "I know you're Bob, because you've got your father's nose and forehead. I clean forgot the little creature! Ah, I made a great mistake when I was young, my boy! Bachelorhood is——"

I hustled him effusively into the passage and into the parlour. He hadn't time to ask why the door was not opened more quickly, why I hadn't told him of my change of address, or anything else. And I was hoping that I could get him out of the place again in a few minutes. I would swear that the local climate was bad for his complaint, whatever it was. Just imagine my predicament if Mrs. Hanbury returned while I was exhibiting her baby as mine!

"Ugh!" grunted uncle Tom, as he let himself fall into a chair and nearly broke it. "It's chilly here. No fire? Where's my niece? Where's the baby? It's sure to be cold here. Why don't you let me see the child?"

I was about to observe that he hadn't given me time to answer his questions or do anything else, but I refrained. If he were in a hurry, so much the better for me.

I ran into the next room and came staggering in with the cradle, in which the one-year-old was sitting up in a lively manner. I had not dared to take him out and carry him in my arms, for I positively didn't quite know how to manage it. I said hard things to myself for not having practised the art of carrying a baby.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed my uncle, with astonished eyes. "Is the child a cripple? Why don't you let him run about. Not old enough? H'm! Suppose not, but can't you carry him without all *that?*"

I set the cradle down and whistled to the child, trying to coax it to look at uncle. Then it began to cry.

"Take it up, man!" said uncle.

"Hush-a-by!" I hummed in desperation, taking the bundle of humanity in my arms. "Here, Billy, Harry, or whatever your name is, look at unky!"

"Don't you know the name of your own child?" demanded Uncle Tom.

I felt like throwing the baby at him and bolting. The little creature didn't seem to care two straws about unky.

"Turn his face to you, can't you?" was uncle's next inquiry. "Whoever saw a father hold a baby so that he looked at the back of its head?"

I had had an idea I wasn't holding the thing right, somehow. I turned the bundle round and nearly dropped it in so doing, which made my supposed offspring yell.

"Here, give it to me!" cried Uncle Tom scornfully. "Call yourself a father? I believe I can do it better. Where's your—I mean *its* mother?"

I explained that we were not able to keep a servant, and that the child's mother had gone shopping. I couldn't bring myself, just then, to telling a deliberate lie and speaking of Mrs. Hanbury as "my wife." I handed the struggling lump of flesh and garments to the grim old man, and I am bound to admit that he nursed the child better than I. It ceased crying, and made a grab at his whiskers, a sure sign of friendliness.

"It isn't the least bit like you!" pronounced Uncle Tom dubiously. "Resembles its mother, eh?"

Then my hair nearly stood on end, for I heard the sound of a key in the lock of the front door. It was Mrs. Hanbury returning from her shopping. Unless I could get a word with her and win her over to my plan, the game was up. Why had she come back so soon? My luck was out, and I heartily wished that I had never deceived my estimable relative. I heard the door shut and I understood that I must act promptly.

"Here she comes!" I cried, with assumed joy. "I'll tell her you're here, uncle, and that you can't stop long!"

Of course, the last words were a hint to him to go, for the longer he stayed, the more difficult it would be to keep up the farce. Farce! It looked like being a tragedy for me!

"Oh, I'm not in a hurry, Jack!" I heard him sing out after me, as I left the room. "Chuck, chuck!"

That was to the baby; they were getting on splendidly together. "Suppose Uncle Tom should be so favourably impressed that he should decide to stay in London for a week or two and visit us frequently? Suppose he should want us to put him up!" I groaned.

"What's the matter, Mr. Braby?" asked Mrs. Hanbury anxiously, her thoughts clearly flying to the baby. "Is there anything the matter with him?"

"He's got him on his knee," I replied, mixing up the personages. "Uncle, I mean."

"Uncle, Mr. Braby?" she queried in surprise.

"Yes, yes!" I cried feverishly. "But you'll have to call me 'Jack,' you know."

She actually blushed and dropped her eyes as she stammered:

"Isn't it rather sudden, Mr. Braby? I hadn't any idea—that is, I only thought——"

Then she stopped and I felt inclined to groan again. Here I was, getting myself into a breach of promise case as fast as I could. I began to anathematise Uncle Tom under my breath. There was no help for it, so I boldly took the bull by the horns and explained matters to Mrs. Hanbury. And, in common justice to her, I ought to say that I had never before noticed how really charming she was!

"I am afraid that you have got into an awkward fix, Mr. Braby," she remarked, when I had finished. Her eyes twinkled mischievously. "I am sorry for you, all the same, and I'll try to help you."

I could have hugged her, but that would have settled the breach of promise case at once. I led her into the room, and said in a hearty tone:

"Now I can introduce you, uncle!"

Which was exactly what I didn't do, for I said nothing more.

It was a poor sort of salve to my conscience, as I did not desire to tell more fibs than were necessary. Uncle fell into the trap.

"I'm pleased to see you, my dear!" He was quite affable, which was explicable by the fact that the young widow was a very charming person. Her husband had died when the baby was only a week old, so that (fortunately for my deception) there was only a trace of mourning in her dress. "Excuse my not rising! Your fine son is engaging my attention."

I thought at first that Mrs. Hanbury did not much like acting the part, but when we went into the kitchen to prepare tea, for Uncle Tom had declared his intention of staying till dark, I discovered that she didn't much mind.

"I hope you won't mind playing the part of my wife," I began, and then I stopped.

"It doesn't seem so very hard a part to play, and I think I should soon get used to it!" she answered, dropping her eyes and blushing.

I looked at her half-averted face, and a new sentiment appeared to spring up within my breast. I took her hand

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in mine, causing her to let the bread drop to the floor, and raised her face to mine.

"Wouldn't it?" I asked tenderly.

And then, goodness knows what would have happened if we hadn't heard baby cry. At least, she said she heard him cry and she ran out of the room; but I heard nothing and, between ourselves, I have my doubts!

Well, she came back and said that I had better help my uncle to mind baby while she got the tea ready. But I wasn't anxious to be cross-questioned and I resolved to let him amuse himself with the baby as long as he would.

We had tea, and Uncle Tom quite blossomed into a good-humoured fellow. All went well enough till tea was finished—it was a long affair—and he intimated his intention of going. I began to breathe a sigh of relief and to invent some excuse for preventing him from coming here again.

"Well, Jack," he began, speaking with the satisfaction of one who has the power of doing you a good turn and means to exercise that power, and wants you to appreciate it. "I am sorry to hear that you have fallen on evil days, and I mean to do something that will set you up again. Further, I intend to place some money to the credit of your wife's name, just to show my appreciation of her charming qualities, and because it's well that a wife should have some independent means. I admire your choice, my boy!" He looked with evident admiration at Mrs. Hanbury. "Yes, and now I want to know her name."

Then, like a great idiot, I clean forgot the situation, and said:

"Mrs. Hanbury."

Whatever occasioned that fit of mental aberration, I am unable to say, but I think that I had not recovered from that incident in the kitchen, when—— But no matter!

Of course uncle stared at me blankly.

"That isn't her Christian name!" he declared. "What do you mean?"

"Christian name?" I gasped, awaking to a sense of what I had done. "It's——" Then I remembered that I had never heard it!

Uncle Tom glared at me for a few seconds, then spoke slowly.

"You didn't know the baby's name, and you don't know your wife's! Now, what does all this mean?"

"I believe I heard baby cry!" declared Mrs. Hanbury. Baby had been taken upstairs in his cradle, and I imagined that she was about to escape and leave me to brave the thing out, but she pushed me towards the door as she continued: "Go and see what's wrong!"

I am not a coward, but I gladly left her to work things right; women are so much cleverer than men at that sort of thing.

There wasn't a sound from the infant, so I waited on the stairs and listened for some signs of life from the parlour. Presently I heard a loud laugh from uncle and I concluded that it was safe to return.

"Oh, here you are, Jack! Well, I'm in the secret now, and it serves you right that you have had such a bad hour or two this afternoon. Still, I'll forgive you! I was always ready for a practical joke myself in my young days, and perhaps I should have done the same if I had found myself in such a tight place. But I'll only overlook it on one condition, that's all! That is, that you—— There, you don't need me to tell you, surely."

He pushed me towards Mrs. Hanbury, who tried to get away, but I had her in my arms and kissed her, right in front of Uncle Tom!

"And that spoon and mug, you rascal? Pawned it, I'll be bound! Never mind, I'll get another for that little creature in the cradle. that I will!"

He was as good as his word. He stayed in England till we were married, and when he left for Italy I was, thanks to him, in a position that rendered it unnecessary for me to retain my clerkship.

George Day.

HOW TO GET A SLENDER WAIST, AND HOW TO KEEP IT.

If some good fairy godmother could tell the women of to-day that they might each choose one constituent of beauty, in addition to what they already possess, I believe a large majority would ask for the gift of a good figure with a slender waist. But alas and alack! there are no fairies to be heard, save those of science, and they tell us that the corsets with which we have been wont to try to keep our figures trim are injurious to health, and that if we would be really beautiful in the matter of figure, we must actually get rid of all superfluous fat and not try to squeeze it out of sight. How is it to be done? The clear answer is to be found in a little book written by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, who has been scientifically studying the question for many years, making many experiments, and who can now show a record of thousands of cures that he has effected by his wonderful treatment of obesity. Mr. Russell's treatment, unlike all others, is pleasant as well as harmless, and does not interfere with one's ordinary habits. It ensures a reduction of from ½lb. to 2lbs. per day until ordinary proportions of weight and size are regained, when the treatment may be discontinued. Let me advise all who desire to get and to retain a graceful figure, to send the above author two penny stamps to cover the postage of his book, "Corpulency and the Cure," which he will then present to anyone who asks for it.

A HINT TO STOUT LADIES.

Ladies are constantly complaining that they cannot retain their youthfulness of figure without either taking rigorous exercise in the gymnasium, wearing strongly-boned and tightly-laced corsets, or going in for a course of semi-starvation, to all of which they feel there are the strongest objections. And it is well that these objections are heeded, for all such drastic and exhausting methods of overcoming obesity, or of checking its approach, are weakening and debilitating in the extreme, and if persevered in may leave lasting evil effects upon the system. Very different, indeed, is the simple and healthful method of *permanently* reducing a too rotund figure to beautiful proportions known as the "Russell" treatment. By means of this wonderful system the first day's reduction amounts to from ½lb. to 2lbs., and this decrease continues daily in the same ratio until normal size and weight are attained. The fullest particulars of the system are set forth by the originator, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, in his admirable book entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," which he will be pleased to give to any applicant who sends him her address, and the cost of the postage of the book, two penny stamps. For the benefit of our stout friends we append Mr. Russell's address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

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The Troubles of a Lord.

ROSY: "It can never be. You are so much higher than I in station, Lord Verigrene." Lord Roderic Verigrene: "But, Wosy—don't call me Lord Vewigwene, call me Wodewic—I love you twuly and honouwably. It's no fault of mine that I'm a lord, and above you in station. Oh, I wish I'd been born a shoe-black! Then p'waps, you'd think me your equal! No! no! I——"

Diplomacy.

MOTHER: "So you wish my daughter for your wife?" He (gallantly): "Partly that, madam, and partly that you may be my mother-in-law."

A Strategist.

WIFE: "John, there's a long red hair on your arm—and your sleeve is ripped, too." "Yes, dear, I put the hair on there myself, so that you'd notice the tear."

Another Matter.

SHE: "Engaged to two girls at the same time! Well, what are you going to do about it?" He: "Oh, I am all right, but what are they going to do about it?"

Had Pretty Bridesmaids.

SHE (after the wedding): "Let's extend our wedding tour to the United States, so we can see the Salt Lake City." He: "Good idea; let's take the bridesmaids along."

And He Was.

"No, stop!" she said; "I won't allow you, Alphonso, you must not kiss me; and you can't unless you are stronger than I am." Her voice was filled with indignation. "But," she added, "I know you are stronger than I am."

A New Meaning.

LITTLE JOHNNY: "W'en Miss Nexdor got married her mother threw an old slipper after her. What was that for?" Little Ethel: "Oh, they always do that. That means that her mamma isn't never goin' to spank her any more."

What He was Doing.

"WHAT are you doin', you young rascal?" said a farmer to a remarkably small boy on finding him under a tree in his orchard with an apple in his hand. "Please, sir, I was only goin' to put this ere apple back on the tree, sir; it had fallen down, sir."

A Sisterly Kiss.

"I SHALL go straight home to my mother, Mr. Bicks, I saw you kissing Mrs. Habberton-Browns in the conservatory." "It was only a sisterly kiss, my dear." "She is not your sister." "Yes she is—that is, she promised to be one to me years ago."

Going to Press.

VOICE from the head of the stairs: "Mary, has the morning paper come yet?" Mary (who has just begun to say good-bye to George): "How shall I answer him, my dear?" George: "Tell him, of course, the paper hasn't come yet, as we are just going to press now."

Very Cute.

A YOUNG woman was making some purchases in a stationer's shop when the proprietor suddenly asked: "And when does the wedding take place?" "The wedding? Why, you don't think——" The fair customer blushed and hesitated. "Ah, when young ladies buy a hundred sheets of paper and only twenty-five envelopes, I know there is something in the wind!"

A Circulating Heart.

"MISS BUDD'S heart is like a volume in a circulating library." "How is that?" "Not to be kept longer than two weeks."

A Cheerful Outlook.

SHE: "It will be a pleasure for me to share your troubles and anxieties." He: "But I haven't any." She: "Oh, you will have when we are married."

Caustic.

MRS. BELLA DONNA: "My husband ages much more rapidly than I do." Mrs. Plaster (ambiguously): "Of course, he has so much more to worry him."

Married Clerks Preferred.

MERCHANT: "I always give the preference to a married clerk." Friend: "Why is that?" "Because I find that they are not in such a hurry to get home of an evening as the others are."

All Out.

REPORTER: "Can I see Mrs. B?" Servant: "She's out, sir." Reporter: "One of the family, then?" Servant: "All out, sir." Reporter: "Well, wasn't there a fire here last night?" Servant: "Yes; but that's out, too."

Smoke and Scent.

HE (angrily): "Look at this bill. Four pounds for perfumery—for mere odours that fade away for ever." She calmly): "Gone to meet the smoke from the eight pounds' worth of cigars you have consumed during the last three months."

An Unsuspected Quality.

FEATHERSTONE: "Well, old man, I am glad to hear that you are engaged to be married. Falling in love, sir, brings out qualities in a man that he never suspected." Ringway: "I agree with you. I never knew before" (sadly) "that I had the capacity for spending so much money."

How He Economised.

SHE: "As we are going to be married in August, don't you think you ought to begin to economise?" He: "Oh, I've begun already. That very thought occurred to me this evening as I was coming here." She: "What did you do?" He: "Passed the sweet shop without stopping."

He Knew Her.

MR. SCRIMPS: "I asked your daughter a very important question last night, and she referred me to you." Old Gentleman: "Humph! What did you ask her?" "I asked her if she would marry me." "Well, she won't." "Eh? Has she said so?" "No; but from what I know of the girl I don't believe she would have bothered herself about me if she had really wanted you."

And no Wonder.

MRS. JONES and Mrs. Brown were chatting together over the wall. "Really," said Mrs. Jones, "I think your baby is the sweetest creature on earth." "He's a darling boy," replied the fond mother, "just look at his tiny little nose, and his funny fat cheeks, and his beautiful bald head, and his fat podgy hands. Upon my word, Mrs. Jones, I think he gets more like his father every day." But his father (who had overheard the above conversation) said, and emphatically too, "that he didn't like comparisons of that sort."

How it Happened.

JOHNSON: "I've been sued for breach of promise of marriage by a deaf and dumb girl, and I want to put in a general denial." Lawyer: "Did you ever propose marriage to her?" Johnson: "Well, she insists that I did, and in the sign language, but I didn't." Lawyer: "What were you doing when she claims you were making an offer of marriage?" Johnson: "I was talking to her about the weather, and, in the middle of it, I put my thumb out of joint, and before I could put it in again I may have made some signs that I didn't intend, and put my foot in it."

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A Marvellous Invention.

"I have a little invention I should like to show you," said an old fellow, ambling into the editor's room, carrying a good-sized bundle.

"See you later," said the editor, "call again when I'm not so busy."

"But you gentlemen are always busy," said the old fellow, commencing to unroll his bundle, "and you might as well look at my invention now as any other time, and it won't take more than a minute or so."

"Couldn't think of it," said the editor, "you have come in at the busiest part of the day. Step in again about half-past six, or make it later."

"You see I'm not staying in town many days," said the old fellow, "and it's now or never, if you wish to inspect what I think is——"

"Make it never," said the editor.

"No!" said the old fellow, tugging at a cord about the bundle; "I appreciate the influence of your paper too highly to miss the chance of advertising my invention through its pages, and thus benefiting a much larger public——"

"Come, shut up!" said the editor. "Can't you see that I'm too busy to think about your invention?"

"But you will regret it for life if you don't take a look at it," said the old fellow. "And when I become famous you will reproach me for not insisting upon your giving me a lift at the start. You see my machine is something that must eventually come into use in every household. I know if your wife could see it she would insist upon your purchasing one, and giving it a good notice into the bargain. I call it the self-acting electric egg-beater. First you screw it on the table like——"

"Here, don't spoil the furniture," said the editor, rising in a threatening manner.

"Not in the least," said the old fellow. "You see, there are pads on the face of the clamps, and by touching the spring we set the machine in motion."

"Don't touch it," shouted the editor, pushing back his chair; but it was too late, and a long, heavy bar attached to the machine began to whirl round, upsetting the ink, and scattering the manuscripts in all directions.

"Well, that's odd," said the old fellow. "There must be something out of order. You see this bar beats the egg, and it should have a different motion. The spring underneath here sets the motive power——"

"Will you take that infernal machine away, or shall I call in the police and have you run in pretty quickly?" shouted the editor.

"That is very strange," said the old fellow, as the bar whirled round and caught him just below the eye. "I'll just try this spring at the right, and perhaps we shall get a different effect."

"Leave!" shouted the editor.

"That must be attended to," said the old fellow, as the bar hit the desk a tremendous thump, splitting it from end to end. "Now you see the action of one of the laws of gravitation."

"I'll teach you something about laws," shouted the editor, springing forward and walking the inventor to the head of the stairs and giving him a persuader that landed the old fellow in a confused and terribly forlorn heap on the bottom step.

"You—you'll regret this—when I—I become fa—mous," groaned the old man, gathering himself together and looking up at the editor. "I—I have another in—invention—" But just here the cashier got in his work, and the old fellow was landed out of harm's way on the pavement, just as his patent egg-beater sailed through the window and fell a wreck by his side.

L. Harkyn.

Why is Sand Yellow?

A certain learned professor is devoting his time to discovering why the sand by the seashore is yellow? Speaking of discoveries, calls to mind how many thousands of sufferers from anæmia, biliousness, and debility, have discovered in Bile Beans a perfect cure. One of these is Miss E. J. Marshall, of Grosvenor Crescent, South Cliff, Scarborough. To a reporter of the *Scarborough Mercury*, she said: "Some time ago I was suffering from indigestion, biliousness, and general debility. For days together I would have attacks of biliousness, and for eight long months I was in a shocking state. I could not eat, I felt always utterly wretched and tired. Medicines did me no good, and I went from bad to worse. One day I read about Bile Beans. I thought I would give them a trial, and I did. I had only taken a few boxes when I felt that I was gradually recovering my health. I persevered with the Beans, taking them regularly, and the result was that, in a comparatively short time, I was free from the ailments which had tortured me for so long. I am now quite well, and never have any return of the old pain." All chemists stock Bile Beans for Biliousness, or you may obtain them post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co.'s head English Depot, 119 London Wall, E.C., for one-and-three-half-pence or two-and-nine a box. For indigestion, bilious attacks, sick headache, liver and kidney disorders, neuralgia, bronchitis, all female ailments, palpitation, anæmia, constipation, piles, pains in the back and chest, and nervous and general debility, they have no equal; also for skin eruptions, pimples, and the host of ailments arising out of impurity of the blood, a general congestion of the system, and loss of vital force.

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JONES, A.B.

A Charming Little Love Tale of the Sea.

The liner *Silesian* was ploughing her way through a blue expanse of waters, and Miss Ruth Templeton sat in a low chair upon the hurricane deck with a book on her knee, and her eyes upon the tall figure of one of the sailors. She had noticed him more than once, yet now, as she regarded him half dreamily, she became conscious for the first time of something strangely attractive about the man's face, with its strong, firm mouth, steadfast eyes, and hair that curled in little tight rings upon his broad forehead.

Suddenly he glanced up, and their eyes met, and Miss Templeton continued her reading with a half sense of annoyance.

"Ridiculous!" she said to herself, though what it was that she thought so ridiculous did not appear.

Miss Ruth Templeton was a young lady of considerable fortune, and had created no small stir in society circles; but, growing tired of all the flattery and adulation, she had left England quietly, and was on her way to Aden, where she was to meet her uncle, Admiral Templeton, her only living relative. Thus it came about that Miss Ruth Templeton lay back in her deck-chair on that fateful afternoon, dreamily watching the broad shoulders of the retreating sailor—and that Jones, able seaman, had gone about his duties for the last few days with certain visions of mischievous dark eyes that looked out from beneath tresses of rebellious brown hair.

Somehow or other Ruth's interest in her reading had vanished, so tucking her book under her arm she rose to her feet, and looked about for something to do. The decks were comparatively deserted, and, glancing round, she decided to make for the stern, and watch the froth and swirl of the wake. Acting on this suggestion she had climbed the ladder, and almost reached the taffrail, when a tall figure confronted her.

"Excuse me," said Jones, A.B., in his quiet voice, "but you cannot pass."

"Cannot pass!" repeated Ruth, "and why not, pray?"

"We recently had a slight accident with the taffrail, and it is dangerous."

"But I want to!" she said.

"I'm very sorry!" he answered, still barring her way, and she fancied there was the suspicion of a smile upon his clean-shaven lips.

"Will you please allow me to pass?" she said severely.

"I'm very sorry," he repeated, "but I'm afraid I can't. I am ordered to let no one pass."

Something in the quiet tones of his voice annoyed her.

"Stand aside!" she said imperiously.

"Impossible, madam!" he answered coolly, without moving.

"You forget your position—you are insolent!" she exclaimed, angrily turning her back upon him, and Jones, A.B., noted, with a degree of pleasure, how the hair curled in little tendrils behind her ears.

Miss Ruth Templeton, unused to being thwarted, stood with a frown of thought upon her brows. "How could she outwit this very annoying young man?" she pondered. Then in a moment the frown vanished and a smile took its place, she turned towards him as if about to speak and let fall her book at his feet as if by accident.

He stooped to pick it up, as she had expected, and in a flash she was past him, and had almost reached the forbidden goal, when her foot tripped in a rope — something snapped beneath her, and, with a cry, she had disappeared in the swirling water below. She rose to the surface with a roaring in her ears, and, half-blinded by the spume, could distinguish the *Silesian*, which was rapidly leaving her. A cry of anguish escaped her, her heavy skirts were dragging her under; she struggled wildly for a moment, and then her eyes closed and she felt herself sinking. Suddenly a hand seized her, a strong arm was thrown about her, and, looking up, Ruth saw a face framed in wet, black hair—the face of Jones, A.B. And with his eyes looking into hers, and his arm tight about her, a sudden sense of security came to her and her terror was forgotten.

Almost immediately it seemed to her a boat had reached them and eager hands were outstretched to her. For a brief instant ere relinquishing its hold, the arm about her tightened, and then she was lifted in, and, wet and miserable, rowed back to the ship.

Once safe on board she looked round the circle of congratulatory faces for that of her rescuer, but Jones, A.B., had vanished.

For two days she was confined to her cabin, but on the third, braving the doctor, she insisted upon going on deck, and Jeanette, her maid, having made her a nest in a secluded corner, and put plenty of books within reach, left her to attend to her own business, which consisted chiefly in conversing with one of the stewards.

Ruth glanced about towards the groups of sailors, but Jones, A.B., was not on deck. "Was he ill?" she wondered. The thought was unpleasant, moreover remembering certain words she had said, her conscience pricked her; she wished he would appear that she might explain and thank him.

She opened a book and tried to read, but, somehow, she could only lie and repeat to herself those unkind words of hers —"you forget your position—you are insolent!"

The ribbon on her hair had come loose, she pulled it off with a little petulant gesture and laid it upon her open book.

The afternoon sunshine was warm about her, and with the gentle wind in her hair and the soft, rhythmic throb of the propeller in her ears, she fell asleep.

Thus, when Jones, A.B., came upon her in her quiet corner some time later, he did not hesitate to pause a moment to gaze upon the lovely sleeping face, with the fringe of dark lashes upon the pale cheek, and the proud curve of the lips. Suddenly his eye caught something that lay neglected at her feet, and he went on his way smoothing a crumpled hair-ribbon with tender fingers.

Ruth was awakened by Jeanette summoning her to dinner in her state-room.

"Madame is not looking well," said the voluble Jeanette, as her mistress made a pretence of eating, "and to-morrow we reach Aden. What will monsieur the Admiral—her uncle—think of her pale cheeks?"

"To-morrow!" echoed Ruth; so soon, and she became oblivious to the merry chatter of Jeanette, remembering with a pang that all this time she had not so much as uttered one word of thanks to the man who had risked his life for hers, and after to-morrow she would see him no more.

(*Continued on page 767.*)

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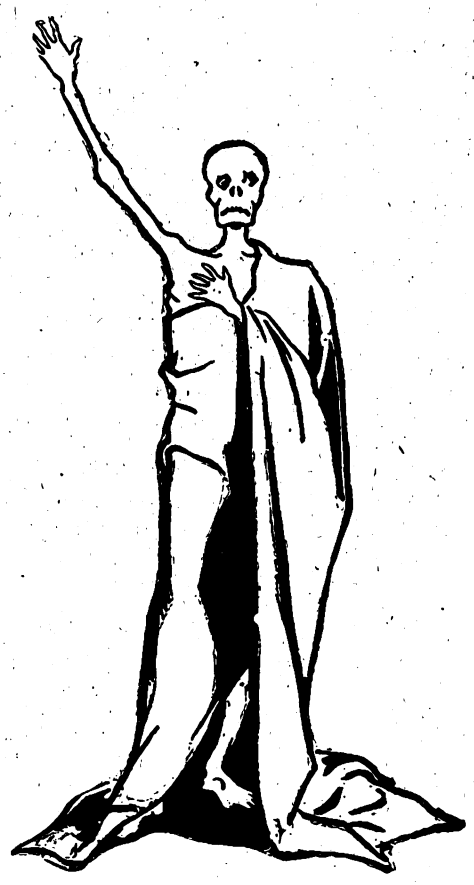

THE BLACK DAY.

The black day is fast approaching—the day which will long remain in the publishing world as a day of mystery—for Messrs. Hammond, Hammond & Co., the Publishers of Professor Boyd Laynard's world-renowned work, "SECRETS OF BEAUTY, HEALTH, AND LONG LIFE," have received instructions from the author to shortly withdraw all cheap editions of his famous book. No reason is given by the distinguished author for his action. The present stock is not over large, and the publishers feel that all SHORT STORIES readers who have not yet secured a copy are entitled to this offer, which will probably be their last opportunity.

To those readers who are not acquainted with the contents of this world-renowned work, the following list of subjects will give some slight idea of its scope. A complete syllabus, showing the contents of the whole of the **127 CHAPTERS**, enumerating upwards of **500 SUBJECTS** and divisions of subjects, can be had free on application to the publishers. The complete work, if ordered direct from the publishers on Order Form below, will be forwarded, carriage paid, for **ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE**, the same edition as sold in the ordinary way for Two Shillings.

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"Give me a wrap, Jeanette," she said suddenly.

"Is Madame, then, going out into the cold?" cried Jeanette, raising hands of affected horror. "Ah! but it is unwise—a good night's rest——"

"I am waiting, Jeanette. My wrap please. No, you need not accompany me."

A pale moon was rising as Ruth reached the deck, and avoiding the promenade, with its lights and voices, made her way to her favourite corner, and sank with a sigh into the vacant chair.

She sat for a while, staring out over the dim mystery of the sea, and so far away were her thoughts, that her wrap slipped unnoticed from her shoulders, until a shiver reminding her, she was in the act of stooping for it when someone paused beside her, and looking up she beheld Jones, A.B.

"Allow me!" he said in his quiet voice, at the same time adjusting the shawl about her with dexterous fingers, and a matter-of-fact air.

"Stop, please," she said, as he turned to go.

"I hope you are better," he said, pausing obediently.

"Oh, yes, thank you," she answered hurriedly, "what I wanted to see you for was to thank you, and tell you how sorry I am for—for——"

"It certainly was awfully wrong of you, you know," he said in his solemn way.

"Yes, I suppose it was," she agreed meekly—"but what I meant was that I ought not to have said—I did not mean those horrid things about—about your position."

His lips quivered into a smile. "It was nothing," he said gently, "please do not think of it."

"Oh!" she burst out, "how can I ever thank you sufficiently?"

"Why should you?" he asked quietly. "I am happy to have been of service to you."

"But I want to thank you, oh, so much," she persisted. "I want you to see I am grateful to you."

"Thank you," he answered gravely.

"If you only could know how horribly frightened I was," she continued, looking up at him with shining eyes. "Oh! I can never—never repay you."

He met her glance for a moment, and then as if scarce trusting his own, looked away into grey distance.

The silver moon had climbed higher, and the soft strains of dreamy music floated to them from the distant saloon.

"And we reach Aden to-morrow?" she asked, without looking up.

"To-morrow morning," he answered.

"I am glad I saw you," she said softly. "I could not have gone away without trying to—to thank you, and I can never forget that you saved my life."

"And I," he said very slowly, "shall never forget you to my death."

He turned and lifted his hat. As he did so a strange thing happened. Something that fluttered loose from its wrapping of paper fell upon the deck at her feet.

The moonlight was strong by now, and Ruth beheld—her hair ribbon.

The brow of Jones, A.B., grew red beneath its bronze, and he stood before her like a big detected schoolboy.

"Yes," he said after a pause, seeing she did not speak, "it is your hair ribbon. I stole it this afternoon while you were asleep. Presumptuous, I know, I am, but is it not enough that I have held you once in my arms, and—I have loved you longer than you can guess."

He stopped, awaiting the fiery outburst of her indignation.

With the quiet, passionless voice in her ears, Ruth sat twisting the crumpled ribbon on nervous fingers, and for a long moment after he had spoken there was silence, then she looked up at him.

What he read in her eyes who shall say? But in that moment the stern self-repression of the man was swept away, his arms closed about her, and his lips were upon hers. Then he had released her and stood back, with the old look battling with the new.

"Do you remember my position?" he said slowly. "Have you forgotten that I am only a common seaman?"

"I forget nothing," said Ruth rising, and advancing with hands outstretched to him, "only I know I love you."

* * * * *

If during that night Ruth's sleep was haunted by thoughts of an indignant uncle, and the stir that such a marriage would create in society, she resolutely put such ideas aside as unworthy.

Thus when she awoke to find Jeanette beside her with her morning coffee, and full of the news that Aden was in sight, her misgivings had ceased to worry her altogether.

The *Silesian* was safe in dock, and a gangway had been run up, as she reached the deck, and almost the first thing that met her eyes was the portly form of the Admiral, her uncle, deep in conversation with the Captain.

They turned and saw her, as she approached, and the Admiral, running forward, kissed her in his hearty, affectionate way.

"What's all this they tell me?" he cried, "about falling overboard. Hoity-toity!"

"All on account of the culpable neglect of one of the seamen,' said the Captain, "whom I reprimanded severely."

"But it was not his fault," began Ruth earnestly, "the blame was wholly mine."

"And you say the young beggar made up for it by saving this very wilful young lady's life. I should like to see him."

"Well, there he is," said the Captain, pointing out a passing seaman. The Admiral stared, fixed his monocle with a jerk, and stared harder.

"Eh! what? Egad!" he cried, and hurrying forward with his great hearty sea laugh, he was next moment boisterously shaking hands with Jones, A.B.

Ruth stood thunderstruck, well knowing the Admiral's fixed ideas regarding rank, and her amazement grew as he advanced towards them, still laughing and talking with his companion; then she was dimly conscious of her uncle's voice in her ears.

"My dear," it said, "let me introduce to you my friend Lord Brampton of Deering. When you know more of his lordship you will cease to be surprised at him, he is always doing something eccentric. You may meet him at a reception one day, and hear of him 'cow punching' in Mexico a month later."

His lordship laughed. "Well, Sir George, under certain circumstances I fancy my roving tendencies may be curbed once and for all," and his eyes met Ruth's as he spoke.

"So it seems I shall have to discharge you, my lord," said the Captain, and linking his arm in the Admiral's, the two old friends strolled off together.

"And so you are not a common seaman, after all?" said Ruth, as they leant over the bulwarks watching the busy quay.

"I'm afraid not," said his lordship, covertly slipping his hand over hers, "but you can love me just as much?"

"I don't know," she answered slowly, looking up with eyes full of mischief, "because you know, I have fallen in love with Jones, A.B."

Jeffery Farnol.

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Here is a competition which everyone can go in for. All that is wanted is an ordinary sheet of notepaper, a pair of scissors, and a little ingenuity. What you have to do is to cut out the prettiest design you can from one piece of notepaper, without using either pins or paste.

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By Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

The Unwelcome Suitor.

"GERTRUDE" believes that her parents and relatives are determined to marry her to a young man whom she does not care for in the least. With this object in view, a party has been arranged this summer, at which she will be largely thrown in his way. She does not want to have to deliberately refuse him, and asks me how she can avoid unpleasantness.

❦❦❦

Are there to be any other men at the party? If so, you might, to prevent embarrassment, show much more pointed attentions towards them, in a way which should discourage your unwelcome suitor. If there are not other men, attach yourself firmly to other girls present, and give the objectionable one as little chance of being alone with you as possible. As a very last resource, have you not a brother or male cousin who could be present at the party, who will be sufficiently in sympathy with you as to help you to baffle the enemy?

❦❦❦

Stage Hero-Worship.

"HOPELESS" tells me she is desperately in love with a very well-known actor. This infatuation has been discovered by some of her friends, who tell her that it is immodest and unwomanly for a girl to fall in love with those far beyond her station.

❦❦❦

Certainly, "HOPELESS," you do not deserve such cruel names. It is not unnatural that a powerful actor like the one you mention should have made you spell-bound. But do not delude yourself with any hope that such an affair can lead to anything. Why not be content, like many others, to worship him as a hero? After all, it is probably only his stage-self you are in love with. As a man, quite possibly he would cease to exercise any such spell.

❦❦❦

You will soon grow out of this infatuation, as you are only eighteen, and in a year or two will no doubt meet the right man in real life. Meanwhile, why not cure your present distraction by going and seeing as many other actors as possible. You will, by this means, see that there are many other men on the stage equally splendid, and realise that falling in love with them, "in the paint and powder," is just as foolish as losing your heart to a hero in a novel, or, for that matter, a statue.

❦❦❦

"Once Bit, Twice Shy."

I THINK, "F. C." (Bangor), you will discover that the old proverb, "Once bit, twice shy," is likely to hold good in the case, of the young man who has been in a breach of promise case, but has now started an affair with your sister. I certainly think he will have benefitted by his experience, and will be very careful against its occurring again. Your sister, if she is fond of him, should delicately hint that in her case his intentions must be serious, or she will not hesitate to act as the other young lady did, and this will soon put to the real test whether the man is honourable or not. Perhaps you, as her brother, might hint something to the same effect.

❦❦❦

Must have a V.C.

"HARRY W." has a very exacting sweetheart. He has just returned from the front, and finds that his young lady has jilted him because he has not won the Victoria Cross.

If "HARRY" were a courtier, he should have replied, "No, I place my hopes in winning something infinitely more valuable, that is yourself." But if she seriously means what she says, I certainly should not follow the suit, were I "HARRY." If is apparent that it is not him that she loves, but a decorated ornament, and I should refer her to the nearest dealer in those goods.

❦❦❦

Should Consumptives Marry?

"DISTRACTED" has been engaged to a girl for some time, but only recently he has discovered that there is consumption in her family. Would he be justified in breaking off the match, on discovering this, seeing how the girl is likely to have inherited the disease?

❦❦❦

Before doing anything so cruel, "DISTRACTED" should get proper medical advice. If this proves that the girl is herself likely to become consumptive, then there is little doubt that it will be his absolute duty to break off the match. Without health, marriage is always more or less an injustice to future generations, and the grief in store for a father and mother of consumptive children will be far greater than that of breaking of the match while there is yet time.

❦❦❦

But the examination may reveal that this fear is groundless. All the girl may have inherited may be a "predisposition" to the disease. The relative who died from it may have caught it as a result of infection or severe cold, in which case it does not follow that the girl is more subject to it than others. Everyone is predisposed to some complaint or another from heredity, and the art of living should be to avoid developing disease by proper food and habits. If "DISTRACTED'S" *fiancee* is merely predisposed to consumption, and not actually consumptive, there should be no need for a breach of the engagement. But if the marriage takes place, he should take care to surround his wife with proper comforts and precautions, which may preserve her from any danger to developing consumption.

❦❦❦

How to Attract.

"AMY" is a girl who admits she is not at all pretty, and very little accomplished. She asks me what, under the circumstances, are the best things to cultivate in order to make herself attractive to those she meets. The best quality, "AMY," for attracting others is personal sympathy. Even if you cannot be talkative and brilliant yourself, you can always make many friends by listening and helping them to make a confidant of you by listening to their hobbies, fads, troubles, or anything else they may like to talk to you about. Sympathy often counts very much more in attracting others than beauty and brilliancy.

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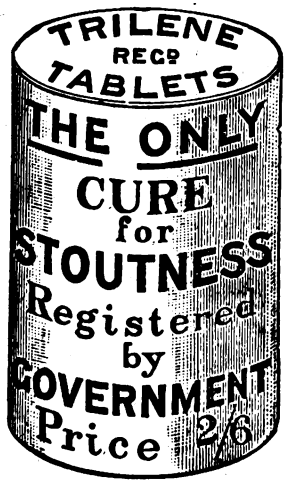

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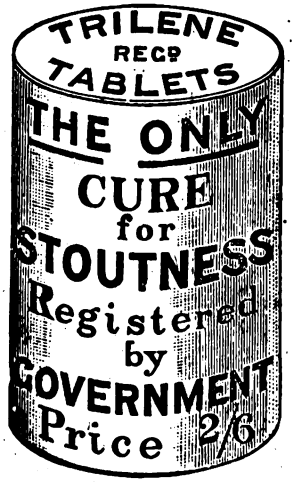

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"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risholm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

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Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 5lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Listorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 3lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

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Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Redol, Bagillt, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

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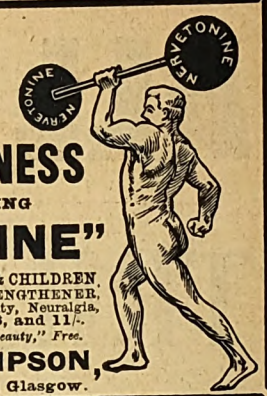

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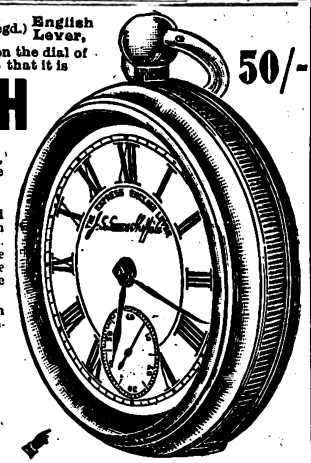

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Cynthia, Her Companion.

II.—MY COUSIN ROBS THE MILLIONAIRE.

SIR JOHN STRICKLAND travelled up to town with us, and lightened the journey, for Frances at all events, by delicate attentions in the way of flowers, fruit, and luncheon baskets.

"Do you think it quite wise to go to the Cecil?" he asked my cousin as we steamed into Charing Cross; "you are not very strong, you know, and hotel life is hardly restful. Let me urge you once again to stay with my sister for a week or two at all events."

"You are so good, Sir John," said Frances softly, "and it's quite sweet of Mrs. Ponsonby to wish to have me. But as I told you, I've a lot of tiresome business to get through. I shall have to see solicitors, trustees, and all sorts of horrid people that I couldn't possibly inflict on your sister."

Sir John sighed, but did not further contest the point.

"Promise me at all events you won't do too much?" he said, as he placed her beside me in the hansom.

"I'll take care of myself," Frances returned lightly. "I shall expect you to-morrow afternoon, mind."

"Of course!" He clasped her hand closely, then waved adieu.

I caught a glimpse of him as he stood upon the pavement, watching us out of sight. The wintry sunshine lit up his face and figure; tall and erect, there was something inflexible—I had said implacable—in his attitude, but his face wore a sad, almost wistful, expression, and his eyes looked tired.

Frances waited about three minutes, then gave a deep sigh and leant back in the cab.

"Thank Heaven, that is over!" she said, and relapsed into silence.

I suppose she meant the journey, still she had not seemed so very fatigued, but perhaps that was merely from politeness to Sir John.

Fluffy met us in the courtyard of the Cecil, his hands plunged in his pockets, and his face pursed in a smile.

"I've engaged your rooms all right," he said, "hope you'll like 'em."

Frances beamed upon him. Then:

"See to the luggage, will you, Fluffy, like a dear boy? Ella's such an awful fool!"

Fluffy nodded, and, leaving him to look after her boxes and her maid, Frances sailed into the entrance-hall of the hotel, a spacious place and almost too well lit, with comfortable lounges, decorative palms, and a profusion of mirrors and soft-footed attendants.

Our rooms were on the third floor and faced the river. It must, I thought, be charming on a summer's day to look upon the gardens that fringe the Embankment, and the trees that grow almost to the water's edge, but in January—despite beds of bright-coloured crocus and early hyacinth, the earth looked bare, and the river gleamed cold and grey under a steely sun.

"Draw down the blinds," commanded Frances, switching on the electric light. "I hate the river on a day like this."

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She stood and watched me from the hearthrug, her fine brows drawn together. Frances looked well that afternoon, she wore a heavy coat of sealskin with a toque to match. The rich, dark fur threw up the whiteness of her skin, and brought out the gold of her hair.

"You are charming!" said Fluffy, who shortly reappeared, "but"—he looked at her critically—"also, I think, a little cross. What is it?" and with astonishing familiarity he patted her shoulder.

This unexpected development surprised me. Hitherto Fluffy had been a devout but a dumb adorer. Now he seemed suddenly to have found his tongue, and—well, something else beside.

Frances did not snub him. "I've got the blues," she said. "No, I don't want tea, I feel more like champagne. Ring, will you?"

"It must have been the thought of Mrs. Ponsonby that depressed me, I feel better now," she remarked a few minutes later. "Thanks," as Fluffy refilled her glass, "it is worth while to have endured Sir John for three weeks, if only to appreciate how good life is without him. Cynthia," she called to me abruptly, "what are you staring at? Give her some wine, Fluffy; she's too dull for words."

"I don't like it, thank you," I replied.

Frances protested; Fluffy quietly filled a glass and turned to me.

"I should run away a bit, if I were you," he said softly, "your cousin's tired." He held the door open, and, as I passed, whispered, "Have a fire lit in your room, you know, and order tea. Make yourself comfortable, won't you?" He smiled quite nicely as he spoke, and, though it seemed strange that Fluffy should concern himself about me, I felt grateful.

I enjoyed my fire and the tea was lovely. I can't understand anyone preferring champagne to tea!

Frances sent for me about eight o'clock. She was dressed for dinner in a wonderful gown of scarlet chiffon, the bodice veiled with a glittering net of gold and jewels. It was cut very low, with a bunch of flowers for sleeves, and showed her neck and arms to great advantage. There were pearls round her throat, and in her hair glittered Fluffy's latest gift—the diamond pins. She had a vivid colour, and looked quite good-tempered. Fluffy was there also; he was not staying at the Cecil, he had rooms in the Temple.

"Good gracious, child!" exclaimed my cousin, "you can't go down like that!" and she pointed scornfully to my white cashmere.

"It's the same frock I wore at Lady Winchin's," I protested, "you never found any fault with it before!"

"As if it mattered what you wore at Lady Winchin's! Nobody troubled about you there, but here it's very different. I simply couldn't sit down with a gown like that beside me."

"Let her have dinner up here for to-night," said Fluffy, interposing once more on my behalf; "you can get her some frills to-morrow."

"Nonsense!" retorted Frances. "I can't go down without another woman—with you at all events," and she grinned at him maliciously. "Here," she whirled me impetuously into her bedroom, "I'll soon put you to rights. Ella, where's that white blouse—not that one, stupid!" as the bewildered maid groped wildly in a box. "This!" and my cousin seized hold of a sweet thing, all frills and lace. In a second she routed out a skirt to match—we were much of a height with perhaps an inch in my favour—and dressed me in the two.

"Curling tongs, Ella," she said laconically, and waved and crimped my hair till I did not recognise my own head.

"That's better!" she said at last, turning me round like a child. "Well, do you like yourself?" and she pushed me half-laughing towards the glass.

I must confess that I quite liked myself; so I think did Fluffy. He stared at me very hard when I went into the sitting-room. I noticed that the men downstairs did the same thing.

Never before had I been looked at quite that way. It is strange the effect crimped hair seems to have—or perhaps it was the blouse.

We had a table to ourselves downstairs in the dining-room—a splendid room, large and handsomely decorated. There were tables up and down the room of various sizes, at some were two or four persons, others held a larger party. All the tables were beautifully laid with shining plate and glass, and lit by silver lamps with pretty pink shades. There were little glass bowls on most of the tables filled with carnations and ferns.

All the men were in evening dress, and the women wore exquisite frocks. I recognised some from their portraits in the society papers. I picked out four actresses, a countess, and an Australian beauty. It was quite exciting, almost like meeting old friends.

It was very pleasant to sit there at dinner, nicely dressed, and with nice people about one. I could not help feeling glad that I had joined the smart set, if only as a lady companion.

"Frankie," said Fluffy, pausing over his fish, "do you see those two men at the next table—the one at your right, I mean?"

"What of them?"

"The man with the goatee beard and the sandy hair is Hiram Pettigrew, the American millionaire. I don't know who the other chap is."

Frances did not seem to hear the last part of this remark, she was looking intently at the millionaire, studying his face with those strange eyes of hers, that, to me, never seemed twice alike. To-night they were brilliant as diamonds, and as fascinating. The American seemed to feel their influence, he turned his head sharply towards her and stared in open, undisguised admiration. For a second or two she held his gaze, then slowly drooped her eyelids and went on calmly with her dinner.

Later in the evening when Frankie and I were in our sitting room upstairs, Fluffy burst in upon us much excited.

"What do you think of this?" he shouted, brandishing a piece of pasteboard between his thumb and first finger.

Frances snatched the card from him, and read out the name of "Hiram Pettigrew." She laughed as she read, then dropped the card upon the table and leant back in her favourite attitude against the mantelpiece.

A smile twitched at her lips, and she stroked her arm in a slow, caressing fashion, as she had a trick of doing when deep in thought.

For some strange reason her attitude seemed to ruffle the even-tempered Fluffy. His face grew quite red and he snapped his fingers two or three times.

"Pettigrew's married—married," he almost shouted, and glared at Frances defiantly.

"What of it?" she returned with a shrug. "I'm not interested in the man, but the millionaire. I suppose he is the real thing? One is so taken in these days, and Yankees are not always what they seem."

"There's no doubt that Pettigrew is the genuine article," said Fluffy, suddenly grown calm. "I've made that quite certain."

"Well?" Frances took up the card again and glanced from it to Fluffy. He nodded mysteriously in answer.

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"Pettigrew has asked me to introduce him to you. He's going to call here, with me, to-morrow morning for that purpose. His secretary is coming also."

Frances smiled.

"I shall be pleased to see him and his secretary also," she replied.

The millionaire turned up to time the following morning. He was a tall man, carelessly dressed, whose clothes hung loosely on his gaunt limbs. There was a look of power about his face, he had piercing eyes, and a humorous, kindly mouth.

He possessed great financial ability, and had engineered some marvellous scoops on Wall Street, but, so his secretary told me, he was as careless as clever, and would leave most important documents lying about his room together with cheques and notes.

It fell to my share to entertain the secretary—by name Percival Hope. He was very tall and distinguished looking, with grave blue eyes and very white teeth. He was quiet in manner and not a bit smart—otherwise Frances would not have ignored him—but I liked him all the better for that, I felt more at home.

Our parties soon grew very friendly, and exchanged visits daily. I don't think Sir John Strickland much approved of the acquaintance, he was so cold to Pettigrew on the few occasions that he met him. Sir John didn't see much of Frances those days, she was too busy, she declared, with her solicitor, to spare him more than an occasional half hour. I don't know when she managed to find time for her solicitor, for she was driving and shopping with Pettigrew most mornings and some afternoons.

My cousin playfully declared that she was going to launch the American into Society "right away." She certainly introduced some radical changes in his appearance. He was compelled to don Bond Street clothes, patent boots, and fashionable collars.

"He really is improved," I whispered to Percival Hope the first time Pettigrew appeared, immaculate in frock coat and light grey trousers.

"I prefer him in his old get-up, he looks more natural. But after all it doesn't matter what he wears, the man's such a real good sort, Miss Hamilton. I've never met anyone like him, I don't think there is another as generous and open-hearted. The worst of it is he's always being imposed on."

The secretary frowned as he spoke and glanced towards Frances, who was lecturing the millionaire on the folly of keeping things in the breast pocket of his coat.

"You can't expect a coat to set if you cram all this rubbish into it," she protested, drawing out a packet of letters, a handkerchief, and a pocket book, this last considerably the worse for wear.

"You are not to keep anything in this pocket at all. Your handkerchief you put up your sleeve—so," she tucked it in place with a pretty gesture. "Your letters, if you are a wise man, you will burn, and your pocket book—" she gave an exclamation as she picked it up. "Mr. Pettigrew, you are too dreadfully careless! You are actually carrying bank notes to an immense amount in a pocket book that is split up at the sides."

He laughed, and recaptured his property. "It's an old friend of mine," he said, "that pocket book and I have been through some rough times together, and I don't care to part with it. Still I admit it isn't very safe."

"It's most dangerous," cried Frances, "and must not be allowed to continue. Come out with me at once, and I'll buy you a proper pocket book, not a thing like that."

She swept him off, and when they reappeared at lunch Pettigrew was proud as a child of his new possession—a pocket book of green crocodile leather, mounted in silver. I did not think it quite up to the level of Frances' usual taste. She prided herself on being original, but this, though quite neat, was very ordinary. It was handsome and expensive, but one saw its facsimile in shop windows every day. Hiram, however, saw no fault in his new pocket book, and was more careless than ever in leaving it about.

One evening Pettigrew announced he had secured a box for Her Majesty's Theatre. I did not, as a rule, accompany Frances to the play, but this night she told me that I was to go. She had bought me some very pretty frocks, amongst them a pale pink silk, smothered in chiffon, which I wore. Ella did my hair, and when I was dressed Frances lent me a row of pearls for my neck.

Just as we were going to start Ella appeared with a cardboard box addressed to me. I opened it, and found the most exquisite spray of pale pink roses, a shade deeper than the frock I was wearing.

"You're commencing early, Cynthia," said Frances. "Who have you been making love to?"

She tossed the flowers out of the box as she spoke and discovered a gentleman's card.

"I thought as much," she said with a laugh, "here, my dear, read it for yourself, 'Mr. Percival Hope.'"

"How kind of him," I exclaimed. "Just fancy his remembering that I was going to wear pink."

"He's as poor as a church mouse," said Frances. "You're a fool, Cynthia, if you have anything to say to him. But then girls always are fools."

"Why Frankie, it's not long since you were a girl yourself."

My cousin gave a quick sigh. "My dear," she said, and laid her hand upon my shoulder, "I am, what you never will be—a smart woman. Now come along or we shall be late."

I enjoyed the play very much. Frances and I sat in front of the box, the millionaire and his secretary behind us. Fluffy did not appear till the play was half over. He did not look at all well and said he was tired.

During the interval Frances recognised a lot of people in the house, she seemed bowing all the time, and attracted a good deal of attention. She was looking very well, and wonderfully young, in a black gown with deep red roses.

Suddenly she gave a little exclamation, and turned quite pink.

"There's Lord Kinross, Cynthia," she said. "He's coming up."

His Lordship said he was very fit, and seemed delighted at meeting my cousin.

"I've been in Paris," he explained, "only got back yesterday. Where are you?"

"At the Cecil for the present, until I can find a house to suit me."

"House hunting is a fearful bore. You should employ an agent."

"So Mr. Pettigrew tells me. He says they manage these things much better in New York. I don't know if you have met each other—Lord Kinross—Mr. Pettigrew."

His lordship seemed to like the American, and accepted Frankie's invitation to join us at supper very readily. As Lord Kinross left the box—after the interval—he encountered Percival Hope, who had gone to fetch me an ice. Instead of passing on, they stood quite still, gazing intently at each other, Kinross half frowning as though anger were struggling with surprise, while Hope kept an unmoved face. Then, with an abrupt salutation, half bow, half nod, Kinross passed him with a short "good-night"—a greeting which the secretary returned with one as curt.

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The incident struck me as remarkable—the more so as Percival did not allude to it, nor to Lord Kinross, though I gave him plenty of opportunity for so doing. Frances had not observed this piece of byplay, and I did not tell her of it.

From Her Majesty's we went to supper at the Café Regal. The[illegible] reserved a table for us, but the place was so crowded we [illegible] to move, and the people were quite close to us on either side. We had over so many things for supper, chicken mayonnaise, truffles, aspic jelly, and all sorts of delicious sweets. I sat by Percival, who looked after me carefully, but was very silent.

Our table was long and narrow, Fluffy sat at one end, Pettigrew at the other, with Frances on his right. Lord Kinross was next to her, Percival and I sat opposite.

We lingered a long time over supper, conversation was brilliant, and the champagne must have been excellent, even I found it tolerable. At the end, Pettigrew called for the bill; taking out his pocket book he extracted a note.

The waiter hurried off to get it changed. The American leaning his arm upon the table resumed his talk with Frances, the pocket book meanwhile lying by his plate—between him and Percival. Frances was very fascinating that night, she smiled at the millionaire in a soft bewitching fashion that seemed to daze him, for he stopped short in the middle of a sentence and flushed up to his temples.

I was watching Lord Kinross to see how he liked this little *entr'acte*, when I caught sight of Fluffy's face. It was ghastly, with a greenish pallor, and his eyes were fixed in a stare.

"Frances, look!" I cried, and half rose from my seat. In a minute all was confusion, Pettigrew impetuously rushed to Fluffy's end of the table and poured brandy down his throat; we all gathered round him, and the people from the other tables left their seats.

The brandy did poor Fluffy good, though he still looked very queer. When he was better, and things had quietened down a bit, we had another shock.

Pettigrew's pocket book had disappeared.

"I must have knocked it off in my hurry as I passed," said he. "I expect it tumbled underneath the table." At once, in that foolish way people have when anything is dropped, we all commenced to grope upon the floor, going on our knees the better to find it, the people from the other tables helping us to look.

We were all tremendously excited, and when I discovered the pocket book just by my chair I gave a scream of delight.

"Here you are, Mr. Pettigrew. I am so glad."

"You're real smart, Miss Cynthia," he said, "and thank you."

Altogether it had been a very eventful evening, and I felt glad to find myself in a hansom with Percival, on our homeward way. Frances had gone on with Pettigrew, Lord Kinross having undertaken to see Fluffy to his chambers.

Percival was very quiet, and his face looked grave, almost stern, in the lamplight. Once I asked him if he had had a nice evening, but he answered so shortly that I did not speak again. I felt hurt at his manner, and was inclined to wish he had never sent me any roses.

I went straight to my room when we reached the "Cecil," and had been in bed some half an hour when there came a great knocking at my door. I sprang up quickly and flew to open it. A tall, gaunt figure faced me.

"Your cousin—please fetch her quickly, I want to speak to her. Yes, it's I—Pettigrew."

Throwing on a wrapper I hurried across the landing, but the knocking had already roused my cousin, she had unlocked her door and came to meet me.

"What is the matter?" she exclaimed, and brushed past into the sitting room, where Pettigrew was waiting.

"Oh, what has happened?" she asked. "Are you ill?"

"No, not that. I've been robbed, held up, stripped of every cent that I had about me."

Frances drew a deep breath, and leant heavily against a chair.

"My pocket book that your cousin Cynthia picked up under the table has been emptied of its contents—not a dollar, not a cent left—nothing but these," and he held out some newspaper cuttings, some telegraph forms, and a few old envelopes.

"I don't understand," said Frances. "Sit down and tell me quietly just what has happened."

He responded to her influence, and grew calmer.

"I went to my room some five minutes since, and as usual took my papers and pocket book out of my coat. On looking through the latter I found the contents had been tampered with. Bank notes for some four thousand pounds, a cheque, and a letter of credit—in all some eight thousand, were missing. The pocket book was not out of my possession all the evening, except when I left it on the table while I helped that poor chap Fluffy. In that short time someone was quick enough to snatch the book, grab the contents, and throw it back under the table, where Miss Cynthia found it."

"*Someone*," said Frances, with strange emphasis, and glanced towards the door. Percival Hope was standing just inside.

"Some swell mobsman, I suppose," said Hiram, "there's always a lot about, though one doesn't look to find them at a supper party at a fashionable café. It's a heavy loss—and I felt mad when I discovered it. Otherwise I wouldn't have disturbed you." He shrugged his shoulders, and smiled, with an effort at his usual good humour.

"Where did you find the pocket book, Cynthia?" said Frances, gravely. "Tell me the exact spot."

"It was under my chair," I said; "at least just between mine and Mr. Hope's."

"You left the pocket book almost at Mr. Hope's elbow, did you not, Mr. Pettigrew?" asked Frances.

"Yes. It's lucky for the thief Percival didn't spot him, he wouldn't have gone scot free, I bet," and the millionaire gave the secretary a look almost of affection.

"Considering Mr. Hope was so *very close*, it is strange he did not see when the pocket book went."

Percival came a step or two towards her.

"It is never wise to see too much," he said in a low voice.

Frances glanced at him quickly, for a second her face turned white, but only for a second.

"I can understand your thinking so," she retorted; then turning to the millionaire, she spoke with a sudden quiet dignity.

"I am more sorry than I can say for your loss, especially as it took place when we were enjoying your hospitality. Anything I can do——"

The American interrupted—"My dear lady," he protested, "my dear, dear lady." He took her hand and gently pressed it.

"Forgive me for disturbing you at such an hour," he said. "It was immensely selfish of me. Your kindness and sympathy are my sole excuse."

"Those at least you will never loose," she answered softly.

Hiram bowed profoundly and withdrew.

The story of the pocket book and the stolen notes created a tremendous impression at the hotel. The excitement soon died away, however, in view of the fact that the millionaire was shortly leaving England. His wife was suddenly taken ill, he explained, and had cabled for him. His secretary, Mr. Hope, did not accompany him, however; he remained in London, though not at the Cecil, to try and trace the stolen notes.

We had now been at the hotel some three weeks, and Frances had commenced

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to grumble at expenses. Shortly after Pettigrew's departure, however, she received her dividends—they were paid at very irregular and unexpected intervals—and announced her intention of looking for a house in earnest.

It was while turning out my box in view of the expected removal, that I made a terrible discovery.

I can remember how it happened and what I felt to this hour.

The bedroom with its pale chintz hangings, the bright fire, my frocks, pretty new frocks that Frances had bought me, scattered round, and I pale faced, and horrified seated on the floor, with a parched throat and a dreadful sinking at my heart.

This was my discovery. At the bottom of my box, tightly wedged in a corner between a pair of shoes and a writing-case, was a small flat packet in tissue paper. Carelessly I undid it, and there fell on my lap a pocket book of green crocodile leather, mounted in silver!

[Next Week: "We Take a House in Pont Street."]

An Attempt to Blackmail.

The Story of a Revenge which Failed.

"The plain truth is," he muttered, as he flung himself into a chair in the extreme corner of the smoking-room, "I hate Ronald Barron and I'm hard up. Is there any way of paying off a grudge of that kind with profit to myself at the same time? That's the question!"

It was a difficult question to answer, and Walter Menzies took a long time to think about it; his cigar went out during the process, while the varying expression of his countenance testified to the strength and nature of the sentiments aroused. Hatred, bitter hatred, was the dominant expression; anger, cruelty and fiendish pleasure were also apparent. They might not have shown themselves so plainly on those somewhat handsome features had there been anyone in the immediate vicinity, but he had the room to himself, and he was aware of it, even although he was so deep in thought.

"Ronald Barron was the favourite nephew of uncle Barron, and I was—well, never very well liked!" he thought. "I always hated him, even before I was old enough to have any reason for it! Instinct, I suppose! Then we grew up and he cut me out with Jessie, rich uncle Barron's daughter, so that the money went to him at the old boy's death, instead of coming to me, as it ought to have done. I am the son of his sister, the oldest of the family." He did not stop to explain why such a kinship should give him priority. "And he had the chance of going on, while my business has——"

He stopped, and an ugly smile crossed his face.

"That is, it would probably have failed long ago if I had not been 'cute enough to contrive certain devices that most people would call 'shady' and 'very risky'! They *are* risky, that's a fact, and if I could find out how to combine revenge with profit, that would be very pleasant."

For half an hour he sat in meditation, his face gradually assuming a set expression. He arose abruptly, muttered "I'll do it!" and went out into the street.

Ronald Barron, the object of his meditations, was hard at work in his factory, situated in a rural district just out of town. The district was a favourable one for factories, and other firms had established their works in the locality. Ground was cheap, labour also fairly cheap and plentiful, while it had the further advantage of being near a small river and a main railway line, thus securing moderate charges for the transport of goods. Quite next to his factory, as a matter of fact, stood that of Walter Menzies and Co.; only a few yards of ground separated the boundaries of the two.

Ronald Barron had his coat off, and his hands were dirty with steel filings and oil; he was assisting his engineer in the setting up of a machine which was as dear to him as a child. It was his own invention; he had worked on the idea for years, but had met with many failures. If it succeeded, it would revolutionise many industries. He had nearly attained success, a little alteration, here and there, would settle the matter, he felt certain; so he and the engineer had been working energetically at it all the day. About half an hour before the time for stopping work for the day, the machine was set running, but after a few revolutions one of the smaller working parts broke. It was one of those minor accidents that always happen in experimental work, but it was disappointing.

"We must make that of steel," said Barron decisively. "But that must be left till to-morrow; we are tired now. You can do it before dinner, and we can get it running again, so that we shall be ready for the visit of the gentleman who intends to float the invention for me. I think it will go at last!"

Barron had a house about two miles from his factory, and to this he returned, tired but very hopeful.

"It is the dream of my life, Jessie dear!" he cried, when he had finished telling her all about the day's work. "And it will help up our fallen fortunes. Uncle Barron's fortune was rather a visionary one, for those speculations of his turned out to be unsound, and the securities were worth little more than the paper they were engraved on."

Jessie sighed.

"Still, we have been happy here," she said, brightening, "and that is the great thing. But you are not eating; I cannot allow you to become so absorbed in your invention, and you must try to throw it off when you are at home."

But Ronald could not rest, and about nine o'clock he went out on the pretext of having a walk before retiring. A slight alteration of a working part had occurred to him, and he thought he would go to the factory and look at the part in question. He smiled as he struck across the fields; the watchman never knew when his employer might enter the premises.

He walked almost to the gate of the factory and then stopped. It was rather too bad to deceive Jessie; she would be expecting him back, but if he once got at that machine it might be one o'clock in the morning before he returned! No, it was not fair to her, and he would go home at once! He swung round on his heel and retraced his steps. He stopped a few yards off, just to take out his silver match-box and relight his cigar, after which he stepped out briskly.

The evening papers of the following day contained an

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account of a disastrous fire which had gutted the premises of Messrs. R. Barron and Co. and the adjacent buildings of Messrs. Walter Menzies and Co. The premises of Barron and Co. were a total wreck; the fire had, it seemed, originated there, and the sparks had been blown to the buildings of Menzies and Co., destroying them.

To the public it was merely a fire, after all; but to Ronald it meant something far worse. All the patterns made for his invention had been destroyed, as well as the machine itself, and that meant months of waiting. His ordinary business would suffer considerably through his inability to deliver orders, which would go to rival firms. The place was well insured, rather over-insured, in fact, but he had not insured to any extent against loss of trade. But the greatest misfortune, in his opinion, was the destruction of the patterns and the machine.

There was one rather startling feature in connection with the fire; the remains of the watchman could not be traced. He had not been seen, and the conclusion was that he had been asleep and had perished, but a search revealed no traces of him. Had he set fire to the place and absconded?

Naturally, some slight suspicion fell on Barron, but it was not entertained for long. He was known to be a man of integrity, and he had been so terribly cut up by the loss.

"He was like a raving madman while it was blazing!" declared a spectator. "Rushed out half dressed and nearly caught his death o' cold. Would he do that if he had set it afire hisself? Acting?" He glared at the workman who ventured this remark; it was an employé of Menzies and Co. "Don't be an ijiot, man! He'd make his fortune if he could act like that!"

That was the general opinion; but the question remained: What of the watchman? It was finally conjectured that he had been smoking, that the place had caught fire through his carelessness, and that he had fled to avoid consequences. Part of the insurance money was paid to enable Barron to begin rebuilding, pending the settlement of the actual amount of the claim, and the matter began to lose interest.

It was nearly a month after the disastrous fire, when, one evening Menzies found himself in the smoking room of the same hotel at which we first became acquainted with him. The past month had not been particularly happy with him, judging by his countenance.

"There seems to be some sort of a cherub, above or below, who takes care of certain people!" he growled to himself. "I thought that fire would have crippled Barron for good; yet——" He muttered an anathema. "Yet here he is again, on top. He gets a good sum out of the insurance, and there is a boom in mining shares that must have bounced his apparently worthless securities to a high figure!" And again the anethema.

"I must certainly say that the fire was a good thing for me," continued Menzies, with a sardonic grin, which quickly gave place to a compression of the lips surmounted by a scowl. "But my ill-luck follows me. Bad luck on horses, bad luck at cards—everywhere! I can't rebuild, so I shall sell the freehold land and the goodwill of the business. But Ronald—"

A customer entered and sat down near him; he began to read the paper, but was startled by the oath that presently came in a violent tone from the lips of Menzies.

"You will permit me to remark that such language is not seemly in a public place," he observed mildly. He was conscious afterwards that his words lent themselves to the interpretation that the oath would have been quite seemly in private, which was not what he meant. "I think that an apology is due to me for——"

Menzies interrupted him with another outburst that froze the sentence on his lips, and he did not recover till Menzies had walked out with long strides.

Ronald Barron and his sweet wife were the objects of these outbursts, but the mild-mannered customer did not know that, and would have been no wiser if he had known it. Menzies strode along in the cool breeze, his heart full of venom against the two and his brain busy with schemes for injuring them. Suddenly he pulled himself up and uttered an exclamation.

"It's the very idea! Why did I not think of it before?"

He lost no time in carrying out the idea, for he was at Cambrian House, the home of Ronald Barron, early next day. The visit was not a welcome one to either Ronald or Jessie, and, as the message was that the business was private Jessie made no effort to see Menzies, who was conducted straight to Ronald's study. The greeting was frigid.

"We have both been the victims of a fire," commenced Menzies, as soon as he was seated. "It has been very unfortunate for me and I'm comparatively hard up."

"It was unfortunate for me also!" said Ronald, resenting the remark and the tone in which it was uttered.

Menzies smiled meaningly.

"Strange about the watchman, wasn't it?" he asked sarcastically. "It paid him to keep out of the way. I mean, somebody paid him to keep out of the way!"

"What do you mean?" inquired Ronald, turning pale with anger and a vague dread. He guessed the object of Menzies' words. "Do you mean to insinuate——"

"I insinuate nothing; I can prove what I am about to say!" was the prompt response. "Sit still"—as Ronald jumped from his chair with clenched hands—"*that* won't help you! Listen! On the night of the fire you lost your silver match-box."

"Yes," assented Ronald in surprise, resuming his seat.

"Exactly! I found it only a few yards from your factory. I saw you leave your factory; you had the box in your hand, and you dropped it in your agitation!"

"You lie!" gasped Ronald.

"Of course, I quite understand that you were hard pushed just then, and that your boasted invention was a failure. You made the last run of it that very evening, and it failed. It was convenient to say that one of the working parts had not been made strong enough, but *that* would have made no difference. The man who had advanced money to pull the thing through, under the belief that he had a good speculation, or something to float a company on and make a pile before people found out its worthlessness, that man was coming to see it working—he wouldn't wait any longer. Something had to be done to cover the fiasco, and that something was done!"

Ronald could not speak; he listened like one in a dream. It was true that he had been financed, that was the only grain of truth in the story; yet he began to see how the unjust suspicion of four weeks ago could be elaborated and worked on.

"It was necessary to find a scapegoat," pursued Menzies, "and Jackson served the purpose—for a consideration, no doubt! You've got to do something when you have been 'having' a man to that extent! So old Jackson was supposed to have a sly whiff at night and set fire to the place! It doesn't seem to have occurred to anyone that the taciturn old misanthrope never did smoke! Did ever anyone see him smoking during the day? Never! He had two teeth out in front, in both top and bottom row, and couldn't hold a pipe! But the flaw in the thing was—his body couldn't be found!"

"It may still be beneath some ruins," ventured Ronald weakly. He felt crushed under the weight of the coming calamity; how could he disprove it? It is always so hard to disprove, and people are so ready to be uncharitable.

"The finding of the matchbox gives you away! Further, I saw you, for you passed close to me just as you dropped the box. You cannot deny that you were out."

"I did not enter the factory!"

"I saw you go in!" lied Menzies boldly—so boldly that Barron wondered whether, in his abstraction, he really had entered the factory without being conscious of the fact.

"Why did you not say all this to the public at the time?" asked Ronald.

"Because I did not wish to give you away, my dear cousin! Besides, these little matters can be arranged in a manner pro-

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fitable to both sides. You don't want it to be known, and I want money, see? *On peut s'arranger!* That is all the French I can remember, and I have never forgotten that because it puts the thing so neatly. It can be arranged!"

"You want money?" asked Ronald angrily. "Money, as the price of your silence. Never! Do your worst! Get out of this place before I have——"

"Not so fast!" interrupted Menzies coolly. "Just think what it means. Disgrace and imprisonment; think what that will be to your wife, *who may herself be brought into it!* She knew that you went out. Think it over till to-morrow. I'll come again." And he went out.

Ronald sank down in despair. Jessie soon rejoined him, for she feared evil, and her heart seemed to cease beating as Ronald told her the object of Menzies' visit.

"He cannot do it!" cried Jessie, with dry lips. "It is too wicked to be permitted by Providence. Cheer up, Ronald dear; we shall find a way out, but we must not yield!"

"It may be best," argued Ronald, who saw only the uncharitable world. "We have money now——"

"You are distraught, dear," she said tenderly, kissing him. "You must forget it. You are not yourself, for my Ronald would not talk so weakly. We will stand against it, whatever comes!" She uttered the words proudly, head erect.

Away in a hospital in the centre of the metropolis, a man was sitting up in the accident ward. He had been brought in by some bargemen, who stated that they had fished him out of the river, miles away, and it was concluded that he had been knocked about by some roughs and thrown into the little river, which was not wider than a canal. The man had recovered consciousness while on the barge, and, on being asked if he had been maltreated, had answered in the affirmative. The bargemen had brought him to a point where a tram made it easy for him to be conveyed to the hospital. Not often that a tram has such a passenger, but it was an early morning car, with a few market men inside, and the incident did not arouse so much attention.

"Shall I get over it?" asked the injured man feebly, when enquiry was made concerning his name, and he refused to say more till he heard the verdict. "My name's Smithers, then," he said, on learning that he might pull through.

It was a wonder that such a jumbled-up piece of humanity could ever be got whole again; he had broken ribs, broken head, and torn face; he was a mass of plaster and bandages; but he was made of good strong stuff and he began to mend.

"Don't remember anything about it, 'cept that I was attacked," he replied to questions, and the questioners could get no more information out of him. He would only grin and as he had five teeth out in front—four old vacancies one fresh—he was not a pretty object when he grinned, so, they ceased their interrogations.

There were some old illustrated papers in the ward, and one of them, about a fortnight out of date, came into his hands when he was able to sit up and read a little with eyes that peeped from between layers of court plaster. He saw an illustration of a fire at a factory, and read an account of it; the report contained an allusion to the suspicion that the owner had set it on fire. That newspaper report appeared to interest and amuse him immensely; he chuckled in a blood-curdling fashion, and the nurse became alarmed lest he had a fit. He hugged that paper and would not let go, so they humoured him, and allowed him to retain it.

In rather more than a week after that he announced his intention of going out. He had made marvellous progress all along, but since the reading of that report his progress had been even more rapid. The doctor demurred, but Smithers insisted that he must go.

"It's a sudden decision, doctor, but a sudden thought has come over me and I want your help to get out. I'm tired of this, and my bones will heal as well outside as in."

They wanted beds just then, so they decided to let him go. An advance was made to enable him to get to his destination, and, by special favour, an attendant was sent with him. He took the train at Liverpool Street Station for a populous suburb.

When Menzies arrived at Cambrian House, as arranged, the next afternoon, he was shown into the study and left to himself. There was a screen in the corner of the room; it was occasionally used in front of the door, but was this time arranged in the corner. Ronald entered a moment later.

"Well?" interrogated Menzies.

"I will listen to none of your vile suggestions!" said Ronald firmly. He was ashamed of his passing weakness. "I have nothing to fear. Do your worst!"

"Highty-toighty!" said Menzies, nettled. "You had better listen to reason!"

"And I'm thinking you'd better listen to Jackson, Mr. Menzies!" came a voice from behind the screen.

The screen was pushed over, and Menzies saw Jackson sitting in the corner, his scarred face expanded in a grin that showed the five vacancies in the rows of teeth.

"Surprised to see me, ain't ye? I like to give my friends a surprise. Well, your game's up! And it's no good trying to run, ayther, for the tecs are about!"

Baffled, foiled in his attempt to blackmail, and confronted by a witness of his guilt, Menzies looked about with a view of escaping, but he saw Ronald guarding the door and a man outside the window. He saw that the game was up, as Jackson had said, and he coolly sat down again.

"You've got the trump card, and I give in!" he observed quietly. "I should like to hear how you escaped, you old fossil, while I'm waiting."

"You're pretty cool, Mr. Menzies, and I admire ye for it," responded Jackson. "But it was playing it low down to attack an old fellow like me."

"So it was, and I'm sorry."

"I'll bet you are, *now!*" said Jackson, grinning. "Well, it won't take long. When I came across ye setting fire to shavings and things in our factory, I saw that the place had got hold, I tried to chase ye, and pull the bell on my way, to give the alarm, but you caught at me and we struggled. You cut me about, but I threw you off, and then you ran and I went after ye, for the place was well alight and I knew ye must have set it afire in three or four places, following me as I went me rounds, and doing the trick."

Jackson had to stop for lack of breath, but he soon recovered.

"I caught ye up some way off, and then you hit at me with a stick. *That* is what I complain of. You ought to have fought fair, with your fists. I stuck to ye, but ye knocked me about and then you must have dragged me bumping over the ground, breaking me ribs, and then ye must have put me into a boat or a cart—I can't tell, because ye had wacked the senses out of me—till ye got me a long way down the river, then you dropped me in.

"By that time I was coming round a bit, and the cold water revived me. I was in luck, for a barge came and picked me up. And that's all ye need know. I kept my name quite mum, because I didn't want ye to think I was alive, for I meant to scare ye some day. I was in luck agin, for I was taken so far away from the factory that nobody thought I was the missing man. And luck was with me agin this morning when I had a sudden inspiration that I ought to get to Mr. Barron; that helped me to spoil your game here."

"Very good! I am ready for the detective, my dear cousin. I suppose I shall make two or three more public appearances and then I shall retire for a while!"

In which forecast he was perfectly correct.

John Smythe.

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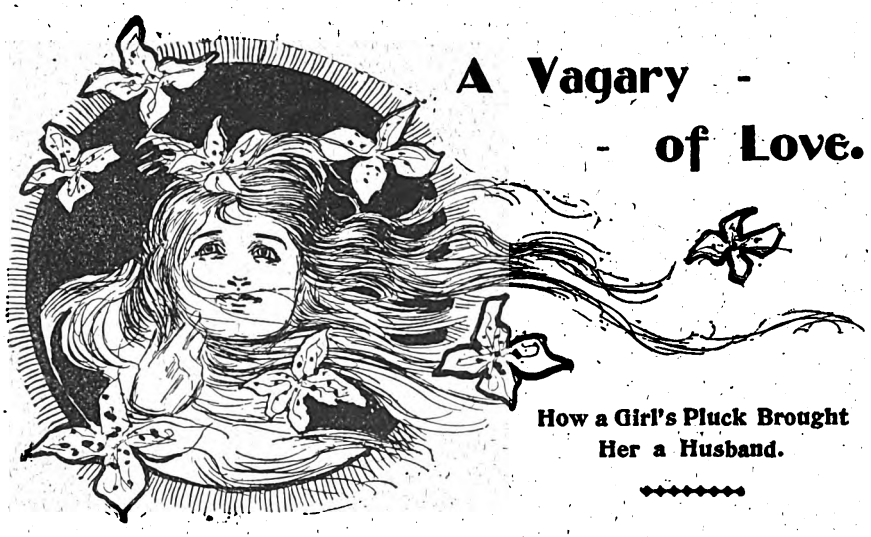

A Vagary of Love.

How a Girl's Pluck Brought Her a Husband.

It was Alice Mynders' wedding eve.

The bride stood in her room fully dressed and waiting for the summons from the groom. She wore a dark woollen gown, and a waterproof cloak with the hood thrown back was drawn over her shoulders. The remainder of her trousseau was in a small leather bag, which stood on a chair near the window.

Alice Mynders had often looked forward to her wedding day, but she never imagined it would be like this.

In place of the village church, aglow with sunlight, decked with flowers and filled with an eager, admiring throng, as Alice had so often pictured it, when she should walk up the aisle leaning on her father's arm, the girl looked out upon a sky black with hurrying clouds and filled with the mutter of thunder.

No bridesmaid was to attend her, although her younger sister, Penelope, nervous and watchful, stood beside her. Instead of the crowd of expectant youths and maidens, her marriage would be unwitnessed except by the household of some country minister, of whose very name she was ignorant.

It will thus be seen that the marriage was to be a runaway one. The girls were waiting for the coming of Jack Rookley, who was to arrive at 10 o'clock with a horse and light cart and take Alice away.

"I'm sure it must be 10 now," said Alice, anxiously. Penelope crossed the room to where the clock stood. She had to peer closely at its face to tell the hour, for the lamp was turned down low.

"No; it needs fifteen minutes yet," she said.

"I feel just as though something would happen," said Alice. "Father was in a bad humour to-night. It seemed almost as though he suspected something. Did you notice how he looked at me?"

"No, no, Ally, that was your imagination. You must be brave now and not let anything happen to disappoint Jack again. This is the third time, you know."

"But to climb down a ladder into that awful darkness! I don't see how I can ever do it. It's a good deal to ask of a girl," said Alice fretfully.

"Not if you love the man," said Penelope warmly, "and I know you do, Sis. You'd do more than that for Jack, wouldn't you?" she added persuasively.

"I don't see why father and he can't agree," said Alice in the same tone of irritation, "and, oh, why doesn't he come?"

The sisters sat in silence for some minutes. Presently they were startled by a tightly-rolled ball of paper flying through the window and falling on the floor with a light thud. It was the signal agreed upon. The girls sprang up, and, after what seemed a long interval of waiting, the end of a ladder obtruded itself slowly from the darkness. It wavered a little and then rested securely against the window sill.

"Come, Ally, courage," whispered Penelope. "I will hold it fast here, and Jack is doing the same thing below. You can't possibly fall."

Alice stepped upon the chair by the window and caught hold of the ladder. "My bag," she cried in a dismayed whisper. "I can never carry it down there!"

"Never mind," whispered Penelope. "I'll throw it after you, or if that would make too much noise, I'll bring it down Now, have you got hold o the ladder? Wait a moment." Penelope turned the light out leaving the room in tota darkness.

"I can't see anything, Penelope. I'm afraid."

"Oh, do go on, dear sister, I beg of you," urged Penelope. "See, here is my hand, hold it till you get started; the ladder is perfectly secure."

Alice stepped upon the sill and caught hold of the ladder. She was trembling nervously. A long roll of thunder caused her to utter a faint scream and jump back into the room.

"I can't do it—there's no use saying any more about it," she murmured hysterically, "it's too much for me."

Penelope stood a moment as though turned to stone. The ladder, agitated from below, scraped against the sill with a slight noise. "Alice do you mean that you are not going with Jack?"

"Yes, I do."

"But what is to be done?"

"Go down to him yourself if you want to, tell him he must think of something else, or he needn't think at all. I'm tired of being worried!" she exclaimed desperately. "I don't believe I care for him as I did, anyhow."

At this moment the rain which had been impending began to fall. Penelope caught her sister's waterproof from her shoulders and hastily put it on, drawing the hood over her head. She stepped lightly upon the sill, and grasping the ladder firmly, began to descend without hesitation.

As her foot touched the ground her arm was grasped by a strong hand, and Jack Rookley, placing his lips close to her ear whispered, "Don't speak—I just heard a shutter open."

Penelope hurried along by Jack's side towards the gate opening into the lane, where she knew a horse and cart stood waiting. She intended to explain as soon as they got out of earshot of the house.

"Listen a moment, Jack," she whispered at length, "I must tell you——"

"Hush, wait till we are safely off," he replied, "and then——"

At this moment a loud, harsh voice rang out of the darkness, coming apparently from a lower window. "Who's there?" it cried.

Penelope's heart seemed to jump into her throat and almost suffocate her. The voice was her father's.

Jack seized her arm and with great, rapid strides hurried her out into the lane. She went with him willingly, her one thought being to get him away. As they reached the cart Jack caught the girl about the waist and almost threw her in.

"Jack, I must not go," she tried to say, her lips forming words which came without audible sound. The young man leapt in after her and gave the rein to his mare. Again the raucous voice sounded, this time from the yard near the gate. "Stop, there, or I'll fire."

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Penelope thought he would do it. Jack half stood up and seized the whip to lash the mare. The girl sprang behind him, and, covering his body with hers, stretched out her arms.

Instantly the report of a gun rang out, and the shot whistled through the top of the cart close to their heads. Stifling an imprecation, Jack seized Penelope with his right hand and forced her back in the seat. Now they were dashing up the road, and a second shot from the old man's gun fell wide.

A flash of lightning revealed the girl's face to the young man.

"Penelope!" he cried in amazement.

"Yes, it's Penelope," she answered calmly.

"Where is Alice?"

"She couldn't come."

"Why not?"

"She was afraid to come down the ladder."

"But you—why did you come?"

"To warn you—I did not have time on account of father."

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the flying of the horse.

"She was afraid to come down the ladder to marry me," said Jack slowly. "You weren't afraid to come down to tell me she wasn't going to keep her word. Just now you jumped between me and your father's gunshot. Why did you do that?"

Penelope's heart leapt, but still she said nothing.

"Well, I've done with her now."

"No, no, Jack, don't say that."

"Yes, I do say it. This is the third time she's tricked me. There was the time she went to Stanton on a visit to her cousin; she went back on me then after promising. Then there was the time when I had a chance to go into business for myself. She agreed to go with me then and didn't keep her word. No, she simply doesn't care anything about me."

"Have patience with her, Jack, until a better opportunity offers. Remember what an awful night it is."

"The night wasn't too awful for you to come out in. I tell you, you're a game girl, Penelope, as game as they make 'em. I can't ever forget what you've done to-night."

They drove on in silence for some minutes.

"I'll never forget you, Penelope," he repeated, reflectively. "Never."

Penelope's lips were trembling again, but she tried to speak calmly.

"You must set me down now, Jack, and let me go home. I know every step of the road, and I'll not be afraid."

"Let you walk home in this rain and face that murderous old man alone—forgive me, Penelope, dear—but do you take me for a coward?"

"But what are we to do, Jack?"

"I'll tell you presently; let me think a moment. What message did Alice send me to-night?"

"Why, that she couldn't do it."

"There was something else?"

"Well, she said you must think of another way?"

"Didn't she say anything about her feelings towards me not being the same?"

"Jack, you mustn't push me that way; it isn't fair to Alice—she's not herself to-night."

"All right, my girl. Now let me speak a moment. Sometimes things happen in a few minutes the like of which don't happen in half a lifetime. One of those things has happened to-night. I've found out what a brave, splendid girl you are, and I've found out, too, that I love you. Penelope, something tells me that you love me. Do you?"

"Jack, you've said I was a brave girl, but remember I can't stand too much. You shouldn't talk to me like that. Remember Alice."

"Penelope, I'll never marry Alice now, and neither does she want to marry me. I'm sure she told you so to-night. It must be you or no other girl in the world."

The tired mare had by this time dropped into a slow trot.

"Listen, Jack!" cried the girl in sudden alarm. Behind them in the distance they heard the beat of a galloping horse's hoofs. "It's father—I know it is! Oh, what shall we do?"

Jack whipped up the mare and a few yards further on he turned into a narrow road which branched off from the highway. Once here he allowed the mare to walk. In the soft mire of the country road the wheels made no sound.

"He's sure to keep on to the bridge unless he sees us. Heaven send there may be no lightning now," whispered Jack.

"Penelope," he said after a moment, "if he catches us and he wants to kill me, he must; I can't fire on your father; but in this last minute that we may have together I want you to tell me that you love me."

Penelope hesitated a moment. The flying hoofs were coming nearer. Why should she deny herself this moment of happiness? She placed her hands upon his shoulders and put her cheek close to his. "I love you, Jack," she whispered.

The young man caught her in his arms. "God bless you for that, my dear girl," he said; "you have sacrificed your life for me to-night, and you are ready to sacrifice your happiness for your sister, but you shan't do it. Penelope—we'll be happy together yet."

Jack brought the mare to a dead stand. Nearer and nearer came old Farmer Mynders. They could hear his deep imprecations as he urged his horse forward, and the heavy breathing of the animal itself as it galloped wildly on.

He passed the turning and sped on towards the bridge. The sound of the hoofs died away and then Jack said:

"We've escaped that; now we must keep on this road, I daren't go by the highways for fear we'll meet him coming

She stepped lightly on to the sill, and, grasping the ladder firmly, began to descend.

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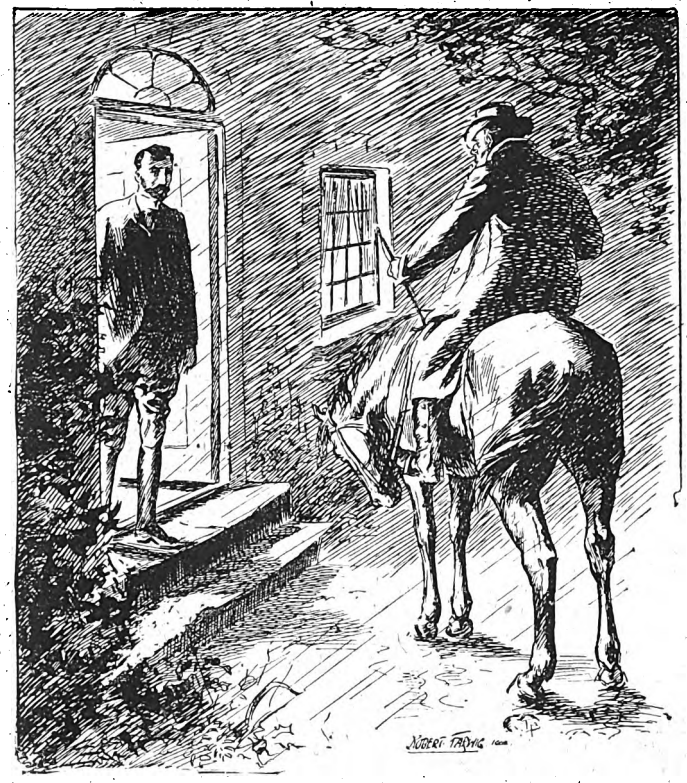

"Ha! Joliffe," came from the road, "is my daughter Alice in your house?"

back. My plan was first to be married, and then to go to Tom Joliffe's. I'd arranged it with Tom and the family to wait up for us."

Penelope noticed that he spoke of his plans as though she had been included in them from the first.

"But, Jack," she pleaded, "remember that things are changed."

"I do remember, darling," he said, slipping his arm round her shoulder, "nothing shall be done without your consent. We are going straight to Tom's now. This road will bring us out at his house. Put your dear head on my shoulder, you must be weary after all you've gone through, and listen to what I have thought of."

For the next half-hour, while the mare plodded slowly on through the darkness and the rain, Jack talked, and as Penelope listened, Alice, her father and her former sense of what was her duty slipped far back into the night and she saw only the new happiness that had come to her.

"Let it be as you wish, Jack, if you think it is right," she said when he had finished. "I would not wrong Alice, but you say you don't love her, and after all she sent me down to you—yes, I'll do it, Jack, I'll marry you."

A feeling of supreme lassitude after the peril of the past hour pervaded her being. She suffered her head to lie upon his shoulder, abandoning herself to her fatigue and her sense of perfect security with him.

And now a light came into view from the gable of Tom Joliffe's house. Penelope drew close to Jack as they drove under the dripping apple trees in Tom's yard, greeted by the baying of the watch dogs.

"What will they say, Jack?" she whispered, her cheeks burning in the darkness

"Leave it all to me, sweetheart," he answered.

The excitement of their arrival and the explanations Jack's altered plans had called forth, had nearly subsided in Tom Joliffe's household. Tom's wife had taken Penelope under her wing and Jack and Tom were sitting before the open fire. The mare had been put in the stable, the soaking garments of the young man were almost dry and his story was finished.

Suddenly a shout came from the roadway in front of the house.

"It's Mynders," said Jack, starting to his feet. "Let me go to the door."

"I'll go myself," said Joliffe, rising in his turn. "No, man," as Jack took a step forward, "this is my house; I'll do as I please in it. If I want you I'll call you."

He forced the young man back in his chair and in a moment more Rookley heard the rattle of the key in the lock and the front door opened.

"Ha! Joliffe," came from the road, "is my daughter Alice in your house?"

"Your daughter Alice," echoed Joliffe in a surprised voice, "no, I haven't seen her."

"She left my house to-night with a man I've forbidden her to keep company with. I'm afraid I'm too late and they're married by now."

"Are you sure there's no mistake, Mynders, and that Alice isn't safe at home?"

"No, there's no mistake. She left by the window and he had a horse waitin'. That girl was the apple of my eye, Joliffe."

Jack's heart smote him, for the old man's voice broke on the last words. Then he heard Joliffe say: "I'm sorry, Mynders, but Alice is not here."

"Well, I must look elsewhere, then; good-night."

The tired horse jogged onward and Joliffe closed the door.

It was almost daybreak when Farmer Mynders, weary and discouraged, reached his home. He went at once to bed, and it was some time after 8 o'clock when the maid of all work awakened him with a letter that had been brought by a messenger. His new sorrow weighed heavily upon him as he broke the seal. He was astonished to find a few lines from his younger daughter begging forgiveness of her father and her dear sister for what she had done.

"You have only to send for us, father, and you will find that you have not lost a daughter, but have gained a son," the letter ended. It was signed Penelope Rookley. The old man sprang into his clothes and rushed into the hall, where he almost knocked over Alice, who was waiting in fear and trembling. He clasped her to his arms in a frenzy of delight.

"Why didn't the young jackanapes say it was Penelope he wanted," he cried, as soon as he could speak; "why did you all keep it from me? He could have had her and welcome!"

"I couldn't leave you, father," sobbed Alice. "I couldn't go against your wishes, and so I gave him to 'Pen.'" Perhaps at the moment she believed she had done so. Certainly her father did not doubt the truth of the statement, then or ever.

The reconciliation which followed was complete. Farmer Mynders was willing to forgive anybody anything so long as he was able to keep his favourite daughter and he soon grew to like and admire Penelope's husband.

Whatever chagrin Miss Mynders might have felt at her lover's slipping his bonds so easily, she was discreet enough to show none. After the first whispered and oft-interrupted interview between Penelope and herself at the family reunion, the matter was never again referred to between them.

When the Joliffes, big with importance, let fall hints of their knowledge of the true history of Penelope's marriage, Alice was wont to say "We all agreed that Penelope was much better suited to be Jack's wife than I." And Mr. and Mrs. John Rookley were so pleased at having one another that they never contradicted her.

F. Livingston.

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A WOMAN'S REVENGE.

By E. M. GILMER.

HE was very young and he held desperate views of life, born of boundless ignorance and inexperience. She was a woman, no longer in her first youth, but with that about her that made the mere pink and white prettiness of girlhood seem as insipid as bread and butter. In every line of her lissom figure, in every fold of her thin black dinner gown, in the very air with which she turned to the callow youth at her side, there was all of the fascination of the woman of the world—the woman who is sophisticated, who knows life.

She had, in truth, rather shrugged her shoulders when her hostess had told young Grigsby to take her in to dinner, but—the lad was amusing her. He was a newspaper reporter. He talked shop, and she liked people who talked shop. It showed you the underside of things, and how the wheels go round. Just now the boy had been giving her the history of the latest murder sensation. A man, an Italian, who kept a flower stall, had been found dead with a knife thrust through his heart, and his face buried among the roses. There was no evidence of any struggle. The man had no enemies so far as was known. Not a penny of money had been taken. There was absolutely no clue either to the murderer or to a motive for the deed.

"Depend on it," said the youth with all the self-confidence of the amateur detective, "a woman did it. The man was a handsome fellow, and he had just been married. Behind it all you will see that there is some black-eyed Beatrice, or Tessa, he had made love to and then forgotten. The old story, you know—the woman scorned. It's the kind of a thing a woman always revenges."

"Oh, not always, surely," the woman replied, with the flicker of a smile, "murders are so unpleasant, and——"

"Different stratas of society, different methods," the boy interrupted. "In her set the woman scorned takes her revenge with a knife. In ours she takes it—God knows how." There was a pause, then the woman spoke.

"Perhaps you are right," she said; "each of us revenges our own wrongs and slights—our hurt hearts and our wounded pride—in our own way. Curiously enough, I have just been watching a little drama, a comedy or tragedy, as you like, that proves your point—with a difference.

"Shall I tell you the story? Yes? It begins back in the dark ages—oh, fifteen years ago, and, as a dramatist would say, both scenes occur at the same summer resort. The heroine was a—a—friend of mine, and at that time she was a mere slip of a girl. Picture to yourself a thin, childish figure, with a mop of red brown hair and great intense eyes that always seemed too big for the wistful little face. Think of her as one utterly ignorant of all the world's ways, but with a hungry, passionate little soul, yearning for love, for music, for beauty, for a wider horizon, for all that goes to make up the salt and savour of life.

"It happened that that summer an old aunt had taken the girl to a health resort, and chance threw her with a man of the world, cultured, brilliant, travelled, so unlike the men she had ever known in her crude life he seemed to her the very god of her dreams. There was not a charm of his polished manners, not a turn of his quick wit, not an elegance or luxury of his toilet that did not thrill her every sense of delight. What he saw in her, Heaven knows. Perhaps in some dim way her soul called to his, and for some time he answered it.

"It's a platitude, isn't it," went on the woman with a throb of pity in her voice, "to say that the girl fell in love with him? What chance has the little helpless, fluttering bird against the serpent that ensnares it? To the girl it was like the coming true of all that she had ever hoped or dreamt. He fed her alert brain as well as her heart. He talked to her of books, he described for her the strange places of the earth where he had travelled, he pictured to her the great singers and actors he had heard, and she choked with the tense emotion of that moment when the artist holds the house spellbound, before the tumultuous applause. Her sympathy and her understanding were like a strung harp that only needed his touch to wake into music, and so he taught her love. Then, suddenly, one night he stooped and kissed her—and it was no longer a child, but a woman who looked up in his eyes with an awakened soul.

"In a few days he went away. The summer was ended. He had amused himself teaching the little girl how to love, but he had tired of the game, and he threw her aside as a child does a toy it has wearied of and broken. As for the girl, she had her bad quarter of an hour in which she learnt many things. She learnt to cover up a breaking heart with a smile, and to laugh to keep from weeping. She learnt the shame that scorches a woman's soul when she gives her love unsought, and when she had learnt her lesson, she knew that all her innocent, girlish trust and faith was dead, and that come who might in life she would have nothing but the lees of her love to give him. She had offered the brimming cup to another, and he had quaffed it, and thrown it carelessly aside.

"You are not to think the man was bad," went on the woman, "he was merely careless. He had amused himself with the girl, and it was her misfortune that she was too young and too ignorant to understand the game, and so got hurt. But time brings strange revenges. While the girl was still young enough to profit by it the old aunt died, and left her a fortune. She went abroad, travelled, studied, knew many, many people in many lands, and was no more the little ignorant country girl, but a personage. People don't grieve always over a lost love, you know, but still underneath everything else in her heart was the smart of the old wound—the shame of her scorned love.

"They never met again until this summer, and curiously enough it was at the same summer resort. Life had brought its disappointments to the man, too. He was ill, broken in health and fortune. He had married a woman, beautiful, selfish, pleasure-loving, who bitterly resented their loss of wealth, and who had abandoned him in his misfortunes. The girl—she was a woman now—saw all this, and she smiled a little bitterly to think how Fate played into her hands. The man was sick, lonely, heart hungry. Her revenge would be so easy to take. It was all there, deeper, more complete than she could have imagined."

"And I bet she jolly well paid him back," put in the boy.

"No," said the woman a little wistfully, "it came to her that revenge was a bitter drink, after all. She found out—it does not matter how—that a certain sum of money would enable him to tide over a crisis in his affairs, and perhaps regain his fortune, and secretly, so he might never know, she supplied it to him. Relieved of anxiety he grew better at once, but through the long days of convalescence the woman lingered near him, breathing into him fresh hope, and then——"

"And then?" asked the boy curiously.

"And then," repeated the woman dully, "she went away. She had taken her revenge, and the man never knew that the woman who loved him had saved him for the woman he loved."

The hostess was gathering up the ladies with her eyes, and in a moment more they had passed through the broad doorway. When they had gone the boy sat staring at his wineglass.

"Well, I am hanged!" he said.

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"Eight years ago!" murmured Allan Blair, as he shut down the lid and locked the box. "Well," he continued sheepishly, catching sight of his slightly flushed cheeks in the looking-glass opposite, "it did us good that meeting in the Scottish wilds, but—but I thought I had got over it long ago!"

He threw himself back in a chair and lived that time over again in imagination.

He was twenty-five at that time; a Scotsman who had never set foot across the border! He was born in the South of England and had been educated there; he had taken part in the management of the firm of which his father was chief, and had worked steadily for four years—and all that without once getting to the north of the Tweed. He felt ashamed of himself when he remembered the fact suddenly one summer; it came like a revelation to him. He cancelled his arrangements for a tour in Switzerland then and there and stated his intention of going north; hence it came about that he found himself spending his short holiday alone in Auld Reek e.

He had passed through Inverness and was amusing himself in the neighbourhood of Beauly. Having left his things at a hotel he had wandered near the mansion called Eskadale, and away through scenery that charmed his peculiar disposition beyond measure. Tired with the work of ascending one of the eminences, he was about to sit down when, on turning at the sound of splashing water, he beheld a vision that astonished him for several seconds.

In he midst of a small torrent was a piece of rock, and on this was seated a woman of surpassing beauty, tossing the water aside with her bare feet and enjoying the occupation and the surroundings with langourous pleasure.

Allan stared at her in a manner which he afterwards felt to have been rude. She was no blithe, bonnie Scottish maiden, accustomed only to the freedom of that wild spot; he could see that her dress was one of considerable richness, such as would be worn only by a woman used to dressing well, and almost out of place in that spot. Before he had time to notice more, she had turned her face towards him and saluted him with a graceful wave of the hand.

"It is very pleasant here!" she cried, smiling sweetly. "Would you like to come? See, there is room enough for two on this rock."

"How did you get there?" he asked, in wonderment, not so much as to how she had reached the rock as in perplexity as to *why* she was there. It was so strange, so unconventional.

"Oh, that is easy enough!" she replied, the languid smile still hovering about her lips. "Take off your boots and socks, walk out as far as you can on that plank there, then jump. It's quite easy!"

It was perfectly easy, and Allan Blair did as he was bidden without stopping to reflect on the ludicrousness of the situation. In two minutes he was seated by her side.

She was beautiful, with an indolent yet soul-stirring beauty. The pallid face, so clear and so finely carved, the rosy-red lips, through which the pearly teeth could be observed when she smiled, the lovely hair that seemed to flow from her forehead, and was so arranged that it was impossible to tell whether it had a beginning and an ending, or not, and the eyes! Cat's eyes, Allan Blair called them, and caught himself wondering whether they shone in the dark; they were covered with long lashes, and Allan felt himself stirred to his inmost being when they were fixed full on him.

"How beautiful!" murmured Allan, half aloud.

"I do not care for scenery," she said, mistaking his meaning. "It is all the same; there is a slight difference in the colouring, or in the kind of tree and the position, and the sky is of a different hue, but there are only trees, water, sky, grass, rock, wherever one goes. What is all that?"

"You have travelled?" inquired Allan, perplexed, yet charmed. He was drinking in all the details of this beauty, which appealed to him more strongly by its langour and the indifference of the woman.

"I am constantly travelling. I know the Continent well. I travelled with my husband, but since his death I have travelled with a trusted servant, a Spaniard, who acts as courier for me. Oh, no!" she added protestingly, as Allan's face assumed a sympathetic expression. "I cannot pretend to say that I grieve any longer; it was a foolish alliance, and he soon grew tired of me, as I did of him. His name was Wentworth—my name is Sylvia Wentworth—and he left me money enough. I shall travel from place to place till—— Tell me about yourself?"

He told her; he could have kept nothing from her, for she fascinated him without exerting the slightest effort. It was impossible to be near her without falling under the spell.

"Ha, here comes Pablo! I will make him go to the foot of this mountain—it *is* a mountain, although small compared with Mont Blanc——" She seemed too indolent to finish her thoughts. "Do you speak Spanish? No? That is a pity, as you would understand what I say to Pablo."

The appearance of Pablo was not prepossessing in any case, but when contrasted with Sylvia it was decidedly repulsive. Allan reasoned that it was not fair to judge by contrast, and tried to think that there was more in Pablo than one would imagine at first sight. He was dark, with heavy brows and a perpetual scowl; the commonest of Italian boatmen, as one sees them in a tour through their native country, compared favourably with this Spaniard. Allan marvelled that this lovely creature, of not more than twenty-four, could endure to be attended by this fellow. Pablo was about forty.

Allan expected to hear her address some orders to Pablo in an imperative tone, but she assumed a very conciliatory manner. There was a lively exchange of phrases in Spanish, after which Pablo went off with a displeased look on his dark countenance.

"Let us get on to the bank," said Mrs. Wentworth. It seemed absurd to think of her as *Mrs.* Wentworth! "We can get ready for a pic-nic. Pablo has gone for the basket."

"He did not seem pleased," observed Allan drily. "Does he travel with you everywhere?"

They had both made their way, with some show of agility, to the bank, and Sylvia dried her well-shaped feet on a lace handkerchief, after hesitatingly declining the offer of Allan's services.

"I have to treat him in a conciliatory manner sometimes," replied the girl—she was little more than a girl, it seemed to Allan. "He knows his way about so well, and I can trust him thoroughly. Yes, he always goes with me. Life," she added dreamily, "is very monotonous; it is always to-day, for of what use is it to plan for to-morrow? The days are the same. It would be a change even to be wicked, if I had any inclination towards wickedness!"

"That I am sure you have not! Wickedness and you could not associate! Beauty goes with goodness!" cried Allan Blair impulsively.

"We are so high," continued Allan, after a pause spent in

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silent admiration, "that I fancy Paradise must be something like this."

Her eyes turned to his; the motion was languid, and for a moment the orbs appeared dull, then they lit up with a fire that made it difficult for him to restrain his feelings; he longed to bend over and kiss her.

"Let us go down a little way and meet Pablo," she proposed. "It is a long way up, and I saw a splendid place for a lunch about halfway down."

She held out her hand; he assisted her to rise, and together they descended. Pablo met them at the spot mentioned by Sylvia, laid the luncheon, and left them, after another animated conversation with his mistress.

As each moment passed, Allan Blair became more deeply in love with the woman he had so strangely met. She asked him questions about himself and seemed rather sorry that he was not a member of one of the parties staying at Eskadale and the other houses within a few miles. That is, she appeared to be sorry, for her movements, her very facial expressions, were so languid that it was impossible to tell exactly what she felt.

"What is it?" Allan asked himself. "She is not cold; when I touched her hand, it sent a rush of hot blood through me, yet she appears so unmoved. Could she love?"

The meal was like a dream to him; he had no eyes for anything but Sylvia. He was glad that Pablo had gone; he would have spoilt the pleasure.

"Pablo has gone to find a lodging," she informed him, when they had packed up. "You are fortunate, Mr. Blair, in having obtained a room for the night. And you have left your valuables there? How trustful you are!"

"Oh, it is in a cottage and the people are honest enough," laughed he. "Besides, no one would ever imagine that I had left money in that bag and a ring or two. I thought it safer than carrying it with me. But surely Pablo will be able——"

"I cannot sleep *anywhere*," she replied quietly. "But I could sleep here, so I will dismiss all cares and have a siesta, with you for a guard!"

She made herself comfortable and he helped her. With her back against a mound, she reclined languorously, closed her eyes, and fell quickly into a gentle slumber.

"How innocent, how trustful, she is!" murmured Allan, with beating heart. "Life with her would be Heaven!"

He watched her, and as he gazed his soul glowed and his whole frame seemed ablaze. The hot blood rushed through his veins. He was intoxicated with love. He bent nearer. The bosom heaved and fell regularly, telling of calmness and rest. The long lashes covered the eyes. The crimson lips were slightly open. He bent over her; the madness of love was upon him. Just one kiss! It was taking a mean advantage, but he would touch those lips so lightly that the contact would not awaken her. He bent so close that his moustache touched her, and her breath came lightly against his cheek. Nearer, lips almost touching; but at that instant her eyes opened, and he started back in confusion as she asked:

"What were you about to do?"

He could not meet her eyes; he bent his head and muttered some words of apology, even while he felt inclined to risk all and take her in his arms.

"See, it is getting dark!" she cried. "We must go down. Where is Pablo? Leave those things for him to fetch."

It had grown suddenly dark, with a mist that betokened heat despite the coming night. They could scarcely see each other. He felt for her hand and took it in his. How the contact thrilled him!

"Permit me to guide you," he begged. "Do not be hard on me. How could I help it? Come with me; I think I remember the way."

He led her by the hand, but before they had proceeded many yards she stumbled. Quick as lightning he stretched out his arm and caught her, literally caught her in his arms. And then the love that was consuming him refused to be restrained; he pressed her to his breast and kissed her. He imprinted passionate kisses on her crimson lips, on her cheeks, on her hair, and she remained passive in his wild embrace.

"She does love me, she does love me!" was all he could say or think, and the Scottish mountain was transformed for the time into a Garden of Eden.

But the mist lifted, and she aroused herself as the sound of approaching footsteps was heard. Pablo came in sight, and a conversation ensued between him and Sylvia.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, as Pablo finished with a strong expression and a look of despair. "He is dreadfully worried. He says that the only chance of getting a room for me is in a cottage some way off, and the occupant of the cottage says that she has let the only room she has to spare to a gentleman for this night. Do you know the district, Mr. Blair? Can you help me? Pablo doesn't mind where he sleeps, and I would not mind sleeping in the open, up here, but I think a storm is imminent."

"That must be the room I have taken!" exclaimed Allan. "Of course, it is at your service! I can get a room elsewhere. You see, it is different for me; I can have a rug in a kitchen, if need be!"

She thanked him volubly. She made no reference to the passionate kisses, but she glanced at him somewhat shyly now; not with that calm, unconscious gaze of an hour or so before. Allan's heart bounded as he observed this, for it was to him a proof that he had awakened love within her.

Pablo walked behind them, and Allan felt inclined to wish him at Madrid or anywhere else. Lover-like, he wanted to repeat the caresses, but he couldn't do it with that evil-looking Spaniard dogging their steps.

"He'll have to go as soon as we are married," muttered Allan savagely.

"What was that—Mr. Blair?"

There was a brief pause before she pronounced his name, as though she would have said "Allan." At least, that was how he interpreted it.

"I was thinking that Pablo was exceedingly faithful to you," he replied, evasively. "I wish he would go on or fall behind, and leave us to ourselves, Sylvia!"

She laughed. It was the first time he had heard her laugh, for it appeared to demand too much effort to do more than smile languidly. The laugh, however, did not please him; it was just a little ironical.

"You men are always like that at first, are you not? Will you change towards me?"

"Never!" declared Allan fervently.

"I fear you will!" she said with a sigh.

Allan occupied the time between that moment and their arrival at the door of the cottage in protesting that he would not change one jot. The matter had to be explained to Mrs. Angus. She was willing to permit the lady to occupy the room instead of Mr. Blair, but she explained aside to him that she hoped the servant would keep out of the house, and that she did not understand why the lady had been unable to get a room elsewhere. All that, however, passed unheeded by Allan Blair; in fact, he became tired of her explanation and cut it short.

It was growing dusk, and Allan felt that he had no right to make people talk by trying to arrange to spend an hour with Sylvia in Mrs. Angus' parlour, especially as this parlour would be required as a bedroom for the two boys who had had to give up their own. So he went off, forgetting that he had his night shirt and toilet requisites in his bag.

Allan Blair got a bed for the night, and contrived to get a fair quantity of tired nature's sweet restorer. As soon as he

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decently could he presented himself at the cottage of Mrs. Angus and inquired for Sylvia.

"Bless you, sir!" exclaimed the surprised woman. "She went off early, and that furrin servant carried the bag, and the lady said that they were to call for you!"

"Gone!" gasped Allan.

Mrs. Angus could give no clue to the whereabouts of the missing beauty and Pablo. Blair made a few inquiries, but he soon gave up the quest, for it would have brought ridicule on him.

Mrs. Wentworth had managed to carry off about £20 and a little jewellery. Not a big haul for one who must have been an accomplished hotel thief. He understood why she was disappointed that he was not one of a house party; it would then have been possible, so she thought, to get an invite, or in some way to gain the opportunity of making a big haul.

It was about three months afterwards that he received the note which he kept locked in that little box, and at which he looked at long intervals. It inclosed a £20 note and the jewellery stolen from him. It ran:

"I have repented bitterly of my deceit and theft. That was the first time that I realised what love is. I had been brought up in vice, but when I looked back on that afternoon and reflected, it gave a new turn to my existence. I rid myself of my accomplice at the first opportunity, but I had to fly or he would have murdered me. I have saved part of the proceeds of that robbery, and I have since managed to make up the total. Accept it, and forgive and forget! No, do not forget! Think that your caresses have brought one wicked woman back to truth."

"It was a foolish fascination on my part, and I should certainly not have been guilty of it had I been thirty-three instead of twenty-five," said Blair, as he shook himself, and prepared to go out for a walk. "But it did some good!"

George Day.

ON BOARD A LINER.

Telling of Two Women and One Man.

Dorothy stood on the upper deck of the liner and looked down at the busy decks. The scene filled her with a passionate delight, for the confusion of arriving passengers, the loading of trunks and baggage, the officers from the company dashing here and there with papers, the noise from the engine of the great crane that was loading the hold with luggage, all meant to her "going home." She was glad she knew no one and could stand there and try to realise that at last the moment had come to which she had been looking forward for six months. She laughed softly to herself at her own delight.

"Nobody could understand me," she thought, "if they knew that I've counted every day since I left my own country until I could go back again. I wanted to come because I had to see things, and I wouldn't have missed it all for worlds, but now that I have grasped my opportunity, seen all of Europe I could in six months, I am glad, glad it's over and I'm going home."

The last warning bell to visitors had sounded, the last delinquent passenger had arrived, frightened at the hour, and had been hustled on board, the ropes had been loosened rom the pier, and, with a thrill, Dorothy felt the first faint movement of the ship as it swung gently from the dock and took its slow course down the river towards the English Channel. Her eyes grew misty as she looked towards the brighter line of water ahead, and thought how they would plough steadily on through the dancing channel out into the sea.

"And the next thing will be our own beautiful harbour!" she said, and turned from the rail to meet the eyes of a man who stood behind her, and who had the air of having been there for some time.

"Henry!" Dorothy exclaimed, and held out her hand. "I never was so surprised in my life. I didn't even know you were over here."

"I knew you would be surprised and I waited without speaking for you to turn, so as not to spoil it. I trust you are delighted—I am."

"Oh, I am awfully glad," Dorothy said heartily. "I left the Pearsons in Brussels and am all alone. It is delightful to fall in with an old friend, and especially some one from home. Have you been over long?"

"About four months. Didn't your family tell you?"

"No; I suppose they forgot it."

Dorothy was now very glad to find that she knew some one, for the time would pass more pleasantly with Henry to talk and listen to. They had always known one another, and yet had never been much together. They fell at once into a friendly intimacy and Dorothy found herself wondering why she had never seen more of him, when they were at home; why they had met only at "the big thing" and never been in the small and more intimate circle. She really knew little about him or his affairs, and yet she called him by his first name, and would have been surprised at anything but "Dorothy" from him. That was because they had played together long ago.

"How perfectly delightful he is!" she thought more than once, when he had tucked her rug about her and then sat down beside her as she lay comfortably in her deck chair, and they had talked of places they liked in the old world they were leaving.

When the first days were over and the ship's company shaken and sifted and settled into place, she told herself she was glad it was a slow steamer. "Not that I'm not eager to get home, but I do enjoy the life on shipboard." A little thought obtruded itself that Henry made it enjoyable, and, as she always talked with herself as though she were two, she replied: "Of course he does. He is so agreeable and sensible," and then picked up her book.

"Do you know," said Henry, early one morning, as they walked up and down on the deck still damp from its daily cleaning and breathed in the sharp, bracing air, "there are lots of pretty girls on board?"

"Yes, all those Canadian girls are pretty," Dorothy answered.

"Have you noticed the blonde, with the floppy hair? She is the prettiest of the lot. I like the way her hair blows out in straight little strings."

"What a close observer you are," said Dorothy, conscious of a sudden dislike to straight, light hair that "flopped."

Later that morning Henry sat for two hours out in the bow talking to the owner of the hair, and Dorothy knew where he was all the time and told herself she didn't mind. How could she expect to monopolise the one attractive man on board? And, anyway, she didn't want any one with her all the time. But when Henry came and threw himself down beside her and said: "She isn't as nice as she looks, Dorothy. She's silly!" Dorothy felt her spirits go up and she talked more brightly and entertainingly than she ever had before, and for the rest of the voyage Henry was a constant companion.

And so the time passed, and the last day came. They steamed along, in sight of land all morning, and early in the afternoon entered the harbour.

Dorothy told herself that here, at last, was Australia, the

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land she had been hungry for, and felt no answering throb from within; nothing but an unwillingness to leave the ship. She sat in her chair close to the rail and on the foot of it sat Henry, his forehead against the rail, his eyes on the white foam at the vessel's side. Dorothy was looking at his profile, when he turned suddenly and met her eyes. There was a seriousness in his face that was new to Dorothy.

"I've made an awful fool of myself this summer," he said.

For some unaccountable reason Dorothy felt nervous, but she said: "Have you? How?"

Henry turned his eyes back to the water.

"I've come back to my own country in love with a girl I have no right to be in love with. I don't want to get off the steamer. I wish I could take command of this boat and head it toward Europe this minute."

Dorothy's hands clasped each other very tight.

"Why have you no right to be in love with her?" she asked.

"Because, when I left Australia, I was engaged to marry another girl."

"Oh," said Dorothy, shrinking back, "I didn't know that!"

"Nobody knew it," Henry went on. "I met the other girl in Germany—she's an Australian of course—and, some way, I don't know how it happened, but I got to care more than I ever thought I could care for anyone."

Henry's eyes were still on the water, and he did not see the colour fade from the pretty face so near him.

"I told her about the first girl when I saw how it all might be, and then, instead of going away, I stayed until I couldn't go, and now it's all in a terrible mess. Dorothy, what do you think I ought to do?"

"Why do you ask my advice?" said the girl coldly.

"I don't know. Perhaps because you seem to be a girl a fellow can believe in." Dorothy felt a lump rising in her throat, but she swallowed it, and said:

"I think you should break with the girl you care the least for."

"That's selfish, isn't it?"

"No! You have no right to marry the first now that you care for the second more. It is wrong to her. Tell her and she will free you, even if it breaks her heart. She won't even blame you, for loving seems to be something ruled from outside of us—by some unjust, cruel, wilful power," Dorothy finished passionately.

"I will tell her if you say it's best, but it makes me feel like a cur," said Henry.

"It's the only thing to do," Dorothy replied, the fire gone from her voice and her eyes fixed listlessly on the nearing shore.

"You are a brick to be so easy on me," said Henry.

"Why should I be severe on you? You can't help it, can you?"

"No; but girls don't usually understand how a man can make such a mess of things. They never make mistakes."

"You don't know anything about it!" she answered quickly. "I know of two girls who have made dreadful, pitiful fools of themselves over the same man!"

But Henry smiled in disbelief.

Two hours later they parted at the docks.

H. Fielden.

THIS WEEK'S COMPETITION.

This week we are willing to present a **handsome solid silver pencil-case** to the reader who constructs the most interesting paragraph out of the words used in the sub-titles to the stories which appear in this number. The three lines of italics in the "Confessions of Cynthia" heading are not to be used, and no word must appear oftener than it does in the sub-titles. **Ten consolation prizes, consisting of cut glass solid silver topped scent bottles, and silver bangles,** will be presented to readers whose efforts come next in order of merit. Communications should be addressed to "The Competition Editor of *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, W.C.," and envelopes should be marked "Sub-titles." The closing date of this competition is June 28th.

WOBBLE'S BURGLAR.

A recent paragraph in a Sunday paper greatly interested the Rev. Mr. Wobbles. It stated that the Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost had said that if he should find a burglar in his house he would "go to him unarmed and talk to him as I would to a friend whom I desired to help. If he then desired to take my goods I would make no protest, nor would I cause his arrest. I would follow him to the door and invite him to come again."

As he read this Mr. Wobbles' face beamed with sympathising assent.

"That's what I call good common-sense," he remarked half aloud. "If Providence ever sends a burglar to my house that is just the way I trust I shall have the grace to treat him."

Ah, how little the reverend gentleman knew of the present, let alone the future.

Even then the burglar was on his way to him.

* * * * *

The shades of night had fallen with unusual deliberation. They had fallen to the extent of about 3 a.m. The Rev. Wobbles awoke with a start. There was someone in the house—someone who was stirring stealthily. The Rev. Wobbles was not a coward. He arose and proceeded to investigate. He heard sounds in the back parlour and went there. The burglar was there, and his dark lantern made him visible to the naked eye.

* * * * *

The Rev. Mr. Wobbles explained his friend Pentecost's system, and the burglar kindly offered to help to put it into practical operation.

"It's a good scheme," acquiescently remarked the burglar, "and if only more coves 'ud adopt it, us blokes 'ud have a sight easier time. Ther perfeshion is full of trials and tribberlations, 'specially trials."

Then the good parson talked feelingly on the subject of covetousness, and the badness of pretty much everything.

For a moment the criminal's heart was touched, but only for a moment, and then he proceeded to fill a large bag, which he had brought expressly for the occasion, with the parson's light and portable valuables.

* * * * *

At last the burglar departed. Mr. Wobbles had helped him pack the bag. He assisted him to the front door, and even looked up and down the dark street to make sure that no police officer, accidently lingering near, should "collar" his burglar.

* * * * *

The next day the Rev. Mr. Wobbles was industriously rewriting his next Sunday's sermon. He had written it before, but the burglar had inadvertently taken it with the other plunder.

* * * * *

A knock at the door. In response to the parson's cordial "Come in" a stranger entered. He was a meek-mannered, serious-visaged man.

"You don't seem to know me," he said, "but I'm the burglar who called on you last night. I stole your sermon. But I read it, and in consequence I am a reformed man. I wish to return your stuff, and give myself up to justice."

The burglar insisted upon it. He was tried, convicted, and was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

* * * * *

This chapter, containing, as it did, the moral to this tale, was too long for this page, and is regretfully omitted. **L. B.**

YOU CAN BEGIN TO-DAY.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

For New Readers.

A BELT full of diamonds has been stolen from a safe belonging to Mr. Mansfield, a wealthy banker, by Seaton Revelle (who is a friend of the banker's) and an accomplice named Benjamin Beard. Revelle accuses Alec Scarsdale, who is in love with Esther, Mr. Mansfield's daughter, of the crime, and he is sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude. Mr. Crump, late Chief-Inspector at Scotland Yard, feeling sure Scarsdale is innocent and Revelle is guilty, sets himself to prove the latter's guilt. Mr. Mansfield as fully believes in Scarsdale's guilt as does Esther in his innocence, and his friendship for Revelle increases. Revelle constantly visits the banker's house in an endeavour to win Esther's love, but so far has not prospered at all. While talking with the girl one day, Mr. Mansfield's new maid, Vance, enters the room with a tray bearing cups of coffee. No sooner does she catch sight of Revelle than she drops the tray, and, pointing to Revelle, screams: "That—that man is *my* husband!" But Revelle, by sheer force of will, compells her to acknowledge her mistake. In the meanwhile, Scarsdale has got into serious trouble for attacking a warder who had used Esther's name in a very coarse and brutal manner. Later on, Crump and Esther are walking in the early morning; the latter sees a woman by the reservoir close to Mr. Mansfield's house, and calls Crump's attention to her.

CHAPTER XVI.
In the Nick of Time.

BUT Crump had already seen!

On the very edge of the reservoir, a woman, her back turned, keeping back the rushes with one hand, was bending forward, peering down into the deep water. It was a horribly suggestive attitude—the attitude of a woman about to leap! It was an instinctive feeling of this that had drawn the words from Esther's lips, and caused her to clutch Crump's arm.

Crump's answer did not take the form of words. He sprang forward. As he did so, the woman straightened up for a moment, removed her hat, and flung it from her.

It is a curious, grim fact—coroners will corroborate it—that nearly every woman who seeks death in the water, removes her hat first. Crump knew this well enough; but he had already jumped at a conclusion.

"Hi!" he barked out sharply.

He had realised that he could not reach her in time. He knew that the chances were a hundred against one that a sudden shock would distract attention from, not accelerate, the deed that was being meditated. His calculation was right. The woman sprang back and swung round, revealing a grey, bloodless face.

A sharp cry burst from Esther. It was Vance!

Crump had reached her now. Taking her hand, he drew it through his arm, and led her away from the bank. She was shivering a little; but she made no resistance. The lifeless eyes looked more lifeless, more hopeless than ever. They seemed to have lost the light of reason. Esther hurried up. Vance glanced at her dully; but she did not seem to recognise her.

"Vance!" whispered Esther. "What—what does this mean?"

The woman shivered a little; then stared at her dully, uncomprehendingly. An awful thought flashed through Esther's mind. Was it possible that the poor woman's reason had left her? She glanced nervously at Crump. The little man's homely face wore a sad, pained look. So this poor creature was Vance, of whom Esther had been speaking, only a few moments ago—the woman who, on the evening before, had suddenly pointed at Seaton Revelle, and had given utterance to those startlingly dramatic words "That man is my husband!"

Crump still held her arm.

"Let me take her!" said Esther gently. She put an arm round the woman. "Vance, you must let me take you home with me at once!"

Esther was not the mistress now, talking to the parlourmaid; but a woman ministering to another woman. Crump, the same pained look on his features, quietly picked up her hat, and gave it to Esther. It was all surpassingly uncanny. Vance moved, looked like an automaton! She suffered Esther to put her hat upon her head without a word.

"Miss Mansfield," said Crump quietly, "you will allow me to come with you as far as the Woodlands!"—Then addressing Vance very gently, "What were you doing just now?"

Pausing, Vance turned and pointed back at the water.

"I saw rest," said the woman, in a low inflexionless voice, "looking up at me from the water, and beckoning, and holding out its arms, and I was going to it, and then there was a cry, and I thought it was Jim's voice—Jim come to snatch me away again!"

She ceased speaking, and pointed up to the sky.

"Do you see him up there?" she whispered, "there, that tiny speck, ever so high up. Jim's afraid of nothing—neither God nor man! See, the speck's growing bigger and bigger. Hark! Don't you hear the crowd cheering—cheering Jim! Only holding on with one hand, his cigar in the other, cool as brass, that's Jim!"

To Esther it was all horribly uncanny, the meaningless babblings of a poor creature whose senses had left her.

"Come," she said, her voice trembling in spite of herself, "we must be going back home now!"

Vance offered no resistance as she started to lead her away again. Crump took her other arm.

"Yes," he said, "we must be going back now." Then very gently—"Who's Jim?"

The lifeless eyes dilated for a moment, and filled with a strange light. For an instant it seemed to Esther that a shadowy look of cunning crept over the bloodless face.

"There's no Jim now," she said softly, "Jim's dead—drowned! I wish that I were at rest too. Sometimes I see a face like Jim's. I did yesterday; but it wasn't Jim's. Oh,

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no! It was a mistake, all a mistake. Jim was drowned far, far away from here, and years ago. We loved each other, Jim and I. till——"

She ceased abruptly. Again it seemed to Esther that the shadowy look of cunning crept over the grey face.

There was a long silence. The three figures wended their way slowly through the wood, Vance moving like an automaton.

Only when they were nearing the Woodlands, Esther ventured to speak.

"You know me, don't you, Vance?" she said quietly.

The woman turned her lack-lustre eyes upon her. For a moment their expression was vacant; then changed to one of recognition.

"Yes, you're Miss Mansfield, You've a beautiful face, miss. It's the sort of face that Jim would have admired"—she gave vent to a low, weird laugh—"Jim used to tell me that I was beautiful—once!"

Then she became quite passive again.

"You know where you are now, Vance, don't you?" questioned Esther as they reached the house.

"Yes, miss; but I won't be staying long. Rest will beckon me again! And——"

She stopped abruptly, and relapsed into the old passive state.

The household was up and doing by now. Mrs. Tilley, the house-keeper, was much astonished at the entrance into her room of Miss Esther and "Mr. Penworthy," bringing with them Vance. The kindly old lady had had more than one chat with Mr. Penworthy since he had undertaken the alterations to the front garden, and the little man had quite won her heart. Crump drew her to one side, and briefly and concisely told her what had happened. Vance seemed to take no interest in what was going on.

"She must not be left a moment to herself," said Crump, "a doctor must be sent for at once, and Mr. Mansfield informed as soon as possible. I'm afraid her mind has completely given way. It's very piteous, very sad. To us it seems sudden; but I fancy this must have been threatening for a long time. And now, Mrs. Tilley, if you would be good enough to see about a doctor being summoned, I will take charge of the poor woman. And"—he dropped his voice yet lower—"there's no need for Miss Mansfield to stay. I'm afraid that she's been very upset. It has been very dreadful, harrowing! I hope you don't think that I'm ordering you about, Mrs. Tilley; but it's very serious, this—very critical!"

But Mrs. Tilley was only too thankful of Mr. Penworthy's presence on such an occasion. She left the room, Esther, in response to a look from Crump, going with her.

Vance moved mechanically to the window, and, folding her hands behind her back, stared out. Crump did not speak, only watched her out of his small, grey eyes. His brain was very busy. The woman's mind had undoubtedly given way. It was absolutely necessary that, for the time being, she should be put under restraint. Then the humane, kindly little man became the detective. To him the woman's babblings, when she had pointed up to the sky, to the speck that was not there, had not seemed meaningless as they had to Esther. Only the night before, Tom Jackson had told her that Mr. Seaton Revelle was likely to make a balloon ascent at the entertainment that was to take place in Lord Normanhurst's grounds, and, at the time, Crump had wondered how and where Revelle had acquired his knowledge of, and experience in, things aerial. In his mind he had jumped at several conclusions. He, too, had noticed the shadowy look of cunning that had crossed the poor creature's face when he had asked "Who's Jim?" He had seen the expression again when he had spoken of the mistake that she had made on the previous evening. The question was—was it a mistake?

The little man's expression became extremely thoughtful, though his watchful eyes never left the figure by the window.

He wanted very much to find out more about this Jim—Jim, who feared neither God nor man!

And then Crump pictured to himself a great crowd staring up into the sky, watching a tiny speck that was descending, and, as it became larger, it resolved itself into a man, hanging on to a parachute with one hand—was this what Vance fancied she had seen?

And Mr. Seaton Revelle was an aeronautic enthusiast.

"I must be very careful, very careful indeed!" said the little man to himself, "I am feeling horribly tempted to jump at a huge conclusion. I am tempted to jump at the conclusion that——"

He shook his head. As he did so, Vance turned from the window.

"Jim's dead," she said mechanically, "sometimes I make a mistake, but he's dead, was blown out to sea, and drowned!"

It was positively uncanny, as if the woman had divined his thoughts.

"When and where," asked Crump, "did that happen?"

The woman eyed him with a look of shadowy suspicion; then drew her hand across her forehead.

"It was so long ago," she answered wearily, "and my mind is a blurr. I forget. Sometimes I forget everything, and only wish to go to sleep."

At that moment the door opened, and the doctor, and John Mansfield, who had been aroused, entered. The banker was looking much perturbed. He had heard from Esther all that had happened. Then Mrs. Tilley stepped into the room. After returning the banker's nod with a quiet bow, Crump retired into the background.

"Poor woman!" said the doctor when, after a long verbal examination of Vance he left the room with the banker and Crump, "she must have been suffering from acute melancholia for a long time. I am afraid restraint for the present is absolutely necessary. It's so often the case, melancholia develops into suicidal mania. Of course, I will call in another medical man. In the meantime, she must not be left to herself for a moment. I should suggest, Mr. Mansfield, the County asylum. The poor woman will receive every attention there, and be treated most humanely. Of course her relatives will be communicated with at once. It would be a great help to me if I could have the woman's family history!"

Crump wished to be in possession of that, too, very much. When, some little time after, he was returning to Woodbine Cottage, his face indicated a state of brown study. He occasionally shook his head. When Esther had told him of the startling episode of the previous evening, he had hoped to have found opportunity for cross-questioning Vance. What had just happened, had upset his calculations. It would be hard indeed, to glean anything from Vance now.

"And besides," he muttered, "the extraordinary thing is that though the poor creature has lost her wits, she is suspicious, seems to have a glimmering notion that I want to find out something about Jim. I am positive that there were moments when she was acting, trying to throw me off the scent!"

He pursed up his lips.

"Yes," he went on, "I can trace you back ten years, Mr. Revelle. Then comes a blank. I should so much like to know what you were, and what you were doing with yourself before that time. It would be such a help. You promise to be one of the most consummate rascals it has been my lot to encounter—the biggest, with one exception, and I bottled him up ultimately, I am proud to say!"

Crump was the most modest of men; but on this occasion

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he had suffered himself to recall one of his greatest triumphs, not without some feeling of satisfaction. But a moment later he rebuked himself.

"My good fellow," he said, "it's a very big mistake to chortle over past successes, and pat yourself on the back, and tell yourself what a clever fellow you *were*. Never stand still, and look back complacently. That's been the ruin of many a man before now. No, my good fellow, look forward, and try and go one better, and if you fail, don't let it be for the want of effort, that's all! Then you need not be ashamed to look any man in the face!"

Then, suddenly, his face beamed all over.

"Hullo, there's my little sweetheart, Pollie!"

And pulling out a coloured cotton handkerchief, he waved it violently to attract the attention of the little girl who was emerging from Woodbine cottage. The child raced along the road to him. He picked her up in his arms, and mounted her on his shoulder.

"Gallop!" said Pollie.

And singing out "Pollie and I were sweethearts, many a year ago!" the late Chief-Inspector of Scotland Yard obeyed orders, and galloped! He reached the cottage in a breathless condition.

After breakfast, before returning to the Woodlands to set about his horticultural work, he leant for some time over the rustic railings, smoking his pipe.

"Jim!" he muttered, "I want very much to find out more about Jim!"

CHAPTER XVII.

In the Prison Infirmary.

Colonel Olcott, the Governor of one of His Majesty's convict prisons, was seated in his office on the ground-floor. An official report lay on the table; a formidable ledger lay open beside him! Beside him sat the Visiting Director of the prison. Strong iron bars, reaching from roof to floor, divided the office into two parts—the one reserved for the Governor, the other for convicts and their escorts.

A door was flung open, and Alec Scarsdale, handcuffed and guarded by three warders, was brought in. He was looking ghastly. His skin was dry, and burning with a fever.

The Visiting Director eyed him curiously as he was brought close up to the rails. He had carefully been through the details of the charge against Scarsdale, and had interviewed Pettigrew, the assaulted officer, and asked certain questions. He had fully made up his mind as to the form of punishment best suited to Convict 35's offence.

"Alexander Scarsdale, No. 35 T," he said, momentarily consulting an official report before him, "you have been guilty of concealing an iron instrument in your cell, of insubordination, and of brutally assaulting and injuring Assistant-Warder Pettigrew—three separate and most serious offences against prison regulations. Your case has been thoroughly investigated by the governor, and I have his report before me. There is no need to go into it again. In a prison establishment"—the Visiting Director was a gentleman who loved to hear himself talk, and invariably sermonised a convict before passing sentence. Amongst the prisoners he had earned himself the soubriquet of "Long-winded Whiskers"—"in a prison establishment the maintenance of discipline is a chief essential, and we look to those men who have had superior education and advantages in the past to set a good example."

Alexander Scarsdale, close up against the iron bars, listened in silence. Mentally he found himself comparing the director's words with those of the judge who had sentenced him. They were very much the same. The deep irony of it all was that now, as then, he was innocent!

"Such offences as yours," continued the Director, "must be severely dealt with. You will be placed under special orders for six months, wearing leg-chains and the dress that denotes having assaulted an officer, until such time as the Governor may see fit to remit them."

For a moment Alexander Scarsdale gripped the rails before him with his hand-cuffed hands, and, with the look of a caged animal, glared through at the men beyond. But no sound escaped his lips. What was the use of speaking? No one would believe him. It would be a waste of time to tell them that he knew nothing of the iron bar; that he believed it to have been "planted" in his cell by the very warder who had charged him! They would not even listen to him.

He swayed a little. He was feeling frightfully ill: the five days of solitary confinement in the punishment cell had told upon him.

It was a cruel punishment! "Special Orders" meant that besides the degradation of wearing the black and drab dress and heavy fetters—yet these things in themselves were little to him—he would not be allowed to communicate or receive letters for the next eight months. All the marks that he had earned towards the remission of his sentence were forfeited. That was the terrible part of the punishment.

Whilst under Special Orders, his cell would be inspected every hour. No books, except the Bible, prayer-book, and hymn-book, would be allowed him. He would be placed on penal class diet, similar to that supplied him in the punishment cell. He would be remitted to labour, but the right of exercise and conversation on Sundays would be denied him. His daily exercise would be taken with other convicts wearing the black and drab, or the drab and yellow dresses—in company, in fact, with the worst characters in the prison!

And the irony of it all was that he was innocent now, as innocent as he had been when he stood in the dock of the Old Bailey!

But Alec Scarsdale was not destined to wear the black dress or fetters that day.

As in response to a tap on the shoulder from one of the warders', he turned away from the rails, a sudden blackness veiled his eyes. He reeled forward, made a clutch at the air, and fell heavily, face downwards. It had come—the break-down!

When he opened his eyes, Governor and Visiting Director had vanished, nor was he back again in the damp, dark punishment cell where he had caught the chill that had developed into a high fever. He was lying in a long, white-washed room, lighted by sky-lights, heavily barred, and with a large stove at the end. It was much like the ward of an ordinary hospital, beds standing at intervals against the walls; but a couple of uniformed warders were strolling up and down, and in the place of the sweet woman—figures that one associates with the hospital, rough-looking men in convict dress were moving to and fro, now turning a pillow, now administering a draught.

It was some little time before Scarsdale recovered his scattered senses. His blood seemed to be burning in his veins. His pulse was throbbing fiercely. Then everything returned with a rush. A low, feverish cry involuntarily burst from his lips. It brought one of the convict nurses to his side—a brawny fellow, with square jaws, and a low forehead, and a livid scar stretching from ear to eye-brow. He raised up Scarsdale, and shook out his pillow.

"Covey," he whispered, "'ow are you feelin' now? Keep your pecker up. You've landed in the most comf'rble shop in the place. Take my tip, and don't you be in too great an 'urry to git out of it. When you're feelin' better, do a sham."

The convict nurse managed to rattle all this off before one of the warders had time to reach the bed and inquire how Scarsdale felt. He spoke kindly, and Scarsdale's grey eyes, for a moment, lit up. He was grateful to the man who

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had treated him as a human being. The warder moved on again. The convict nurse still hovered by the bedside.

"Thank you," said Scarsdale. "Who are you?"

"No. 375, ten stretch for house-breaking, and just finishing my time. Shall be out on ticket in less than a month, thank goodness. Going to go straight, s'wolp me, if I can keep clear o' drink and some of my old pals."

A sudden flush coloured Scarsdale's face, as a thought raced through his brain.

What if he could find some way of entrusting him with a message to Esther—a message that would not run the gauntlet of prying officers' eyes. His heart gave a great throb, and, for a moment, pain and fever were forgotten! If—if only he could get a letter through to Esther!

Yes, he felt that if only he could be sure of getting a letter through to Esther, somehow the burden of life would be easier to bear. Then the old longing for freedom came over him. Once out of the infirmary his chance would be more hopeless than it had ever been. He would be wearing chains! He glanced round the ward, eyed the barred skylights!

Oh, God! For freedom!

Then the thought of Gentleman Jack, the man who, like himself, had suffered at the hands of Seaton Revelle. He had hoped to glean something more from him about Revelle; but now, when he went back to the quarries, it would be to work in another gang. Under his breath he feverishly cursed Assistant-Warder Pettigrew; yet once his hot blood tingled with a feeling of almost savage satisfaction. He had paid the scoundrel; put a mark on him that he would wear for many a day. Scarsdale was no brute, and, so far, in spite of the many human brutes with whom he was to come in contact, his refinement had not deteriorated. What he had given Pettigrew, Pettigrew had absolutely deserved.

The convict-nurse approached his bed.

"I say," whispered Scarsdale, "what's your name?"

The man at once started to smooth out his pillow.

"Ben Needham!"

Scarsdale hungrily scanned his face. It was ugly, rough; but not repulsive. He had meant to wait, to make sure of the man's character; but he could master himself no longer.

"I say, when you go out, could you—could you, do you think, smuggle out a letter for me? You would be well paid!"

"Who said anythink about bein' paid!" whispered the man, still busy with the pillow. "Look here, it's a risky job to get a bit of stiff through; but I dessay I could work it; but more difficult than gettin' it through, is the writin' of it, and gettin' 'old of the paper. Howsomdever, maybe I can sneak a bit of the doctor's paper on which 'e writes 'is perscriptions, and an envelope. You'll 'ave to do your writing under the bedclothes, laddie, and be mighty sharp about it! I'll be seeing about it presently; but I can't say for certin when your chance'll come. P'raps I shall be able to get one o' my patients"—the man grinned knowingly—"to create a counter-diversion that'll give you opportunity!"

Scarsdale's burning face flushed hot.

"God bless you!" he whispered.

Ben Needham moved away.

"I reckon," he muttered to himself, "it's his sweetheart 'e's wantin' to get that bit of stiff to. Well, I'll risk it. I don't mind runnin' a bit of a risk for one o' the right sort. And 'e *is* all right, poor cove. 'E's very dicky and queer, though, and somethink ought to be give 'im to take down that fever of 'is!"

Boom!

The whole ward vibrated! Not a convict-invalid that did not start up in his bed.

It was the boom of a gun!

A prisoner had escaped!

Quick words passed from bed to bed. Even the warders showed signs of excitement.

Still greater was the excitement when, scarcely had the roar died away, the door of the room was unlocked, and four convicts entered bearing a stretcher, on which lay a livid-hued convict, his brow damp with the dews of agony.

And as they bore him past, Scarsdale started and shuddered, for he had recognised the distorted features of Sid Baxter, the man in "the canaries," who, with Gentleman Jack, had worked alongside him in the quarry. They laid him on a bed, and screens were placed around.

Five minutes later, Needham hurried to Scarsdale's bed.

"D'ye know wot's happened?" he whispered. "Assistant-Warder Pettigrew's been killed in the quarry. Baxter tried to do a run, but was shot down by the rifleman. But they say No. 36, known as Gentleman Jack, has got clean away!"

Pettigrew killed in the quarry! Scarsdale lay back in his bed, numbed by the intelligence. A great feeling of awe was upon him. It only seemed but yesterday that the man was hectoring it over him, taunting him, and now death, swift death, had overtaken him.

"They say," whispered Needham, "one of the cranks of the crane snapped, and a mass of stone crashed down upon 'im. I've know'd such things happen afore. It was then Baxter started to run; but I ain't 'eard how the other managed to git away."

Scarsdale could find no words to reply. Heaven knew he had hated Pettigrew, the man who had made his life a hell upon earth, who had heaped every possible insult and ignominy upon him, but the man was dead now, and he did not war against the dead, even though the memory of his brutality must last for many a day.

Assistant-Warder Pettigrew had been summoned to render an account of his wardership to the great Governor before Whom, in the fulness of time, convict and warder must take their stand, there to be judged, not by the felon garb, or the badge of office, but by their lives.

For a long while Scarsdale could think of nothing else. He scarcely noticed the hurrying to and fro in the ward, the entrance of the doctor; scarcely heard the horrible cursings and ravings that came from behind the screen where Baxter lay. But gradually the sounds penetrated into his senses, and he found himself listening.

The felon was dying.

The warder who had fired upon him had purposely fired low, but it is no easy matter to hit a running man in one particular spot, and the bullet had inflicted a mortal wound.

The felon was dying, and would soon be beyond the grip of the law.

On either side of the bed stood armed warders, and it required all their strength to hold him down. Again and again he struggled to rise, crying out that he wasn't a "goner" yet, and he'd "do for some more of them screws afore he sent in his checks." He would have no sky-pilots round his bed, he shouted, when the chaplain stepped within the screens.

Then, gradually, the ravings and blasphemy subsided, and he lay back exhausted. But even then those in the ward could hear him moaning and mumbling as his mind wandered back over the past. Sometimes he was cracking an imaginary crib, and babbled of jemmies and silent matches; sometimes, he was cursing a confederate who had played him false; then it would be Pettigrew. Once he even laughed—a low, horrible laugh—as if something had tickled his fancy. At another time he was calculating out the chances of escape, and those round the bed saw his eyes momentarily glitter with an unwonted light. Then he was grumbling at the food, and declaring his loaf was under weight and the

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potatoes rotten. The end came suddenly. After a few moments' silence, Curly Baxter seemed to regain consciousness. His eyes wandered from the face of one warder to another. The mouth relaxed with a distorted grin.

"I've tried to give yer the slip twice," he said, in a low, husky voice; "the fust time yer spoiled me, and put me in slangs and canaries; the second time, yer shot me down as yer would a dawg. But this time"—he gave a hoarse chuckle—"not all yer screws, nor guv'nors, nor yet gaols, will hold me in. This time, I'm goin' to give yer the slip!"

So great was the silence that prevailed in the ward, Scarsdale could hear every word the man said.

"Yus," he went on, "and wherever I'm bound for, it can't be much wuss than this!"

He closed his eyes. A long silence followed. Then the watchers round the bed saw the grim, livid features again relax into a smile, a smile that had something of softness in it. He opened his eyes, but the light that shone from them told that the mind was again wandering.

He half sat up in the bed and stretched out his arms as if to welcome someone.

"Liz, old gal," they heard him whisper, "I've given 'em the slip, and I'm comin' to yer. I ain't seen yer, old gal, since I stood in the dock for the larst time. They told me yer warn't true to me arter I was lagged, but I never believed 'em. And I'm comin' to yer now, old gal, I'm coming to——"

He sank back—to speak no more. And those that were round, as they gazed down at the felon's coarse, criminal features, realised that even in that black heart there had been one spot of light!

Scarsdale did not sleep that night. The tragic incidents of that day repeated themselves with a gruesome pertinacity; and he would think of Gentleman Jack, and wonder if he had made good his escape. He struggled to crush back an envious feeling. If only such an opportunity had been granted him! Oh, to get away from it all, to get away from it all! He turned and twisted in his bed. He felt his blood growing hotter and hotter as feverish thoughts, in quick succession, inflamed him. Again and again he breathed the name of the woman he loved—despairingly, yet as if seeking to draw consolation from its utterance. Never had the craving for freedom been more intense than it was during the dragging hours of that night. Dawn brought light, but not rest from harassing thoughts.

Even the tin, in which the pint of milk—especially ordered him by the doctor—was served with his breakfast, had the effect of stimulating the wild craving for freedom. He had drained down the contents, and was still holding the tin, when he noticed that some lines had been scratched on the polished surface. Much rubbing had almost obliterated them in parts, but after a while he managed to decipher them—illiterate, doggerel lines, the words mis-spelt, scratched there by some poor convict who had craved, as he now craved, for freedom.

Scarsdale had some difficulty in deciphering the words. They ran thus:

Yer bloomin' king 'is kingdom,
Yer miser wants 'is gold;
But yer convict cries for freedom—
Wot's kingdoms, or wot's gold?

I axe no blooming kingdom,
Nor yet a mint o' gold;
But I prays to Gawd for freedom—
A convict makin bold;

Ten stretch 'tween me and freedom,
"Ten," says the judge, says he;
My prayers, p'rhaps Gawd'll heed 'em,
Poor convict though I be!

Scarsdale lost sight of the unconscious humour, the bad spelling, the want of sequence in the poor words, and only saw the deep craving that had inspired them.

"Poor fellow," he muttered, "his sentence was ten years, and mine—mine is sixteen!"

When Needham came to his bedside, Scarsdale eagerly inquired if any news had been heard of Gentleman Jack, and he was unselfishly glad to hear that he still evaded capture!

Could he ever, he considered, get a chance like Gentleman Jack's?

"And look 'ee 'ere," whispered Needham, "it might be to-morrow, it might be this afternoon, there's no statin' any definite time; it depends on when I can manage to sneak the paper; but I've fixed up things with one o' my patients what's a champion kidder, and your chance to write that letter will be comin' along, and when it comes, make the most of it!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I would not have this Gentleman's Reputation!"

"Dear me!" ejaculated Crump, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, "in the excitement of everything I quite forgot to give Miss Mansfield that letter. Ah, well! I am sure to have an opportunity this morning. Poor girl! It will be a painful pleasure. It was very thoughtful indeed of that good fellow, Tom. I am very pleased with both him and Freddie. I do hope that one or both will succeed in making friends with that rascal Railton, otherwise Tomlinson. I should have enjoyed doing it myself, but I am afraid he has neither forgotten nor forgiven Mr. Duffey!"

The little man's eyes twinkled as he stepped out into the road, and set out for the Woodlands.

The operations that were being carried out in front of the banker's house were extensive, and Mr. Penworthy had the assistance of Mr. Mansfield's gardener, and a couple of labourers from the village. Banks, the gardener, had, not unnaturally, at first rather resented this intrusion on the part of a horticultural specialist, but Crump was possessed of infinite tact, and had, moreover, compelled the admiration of Banks by his remarkable knowledge and skill; and though the whole affair was, as Benny Beard would have said, "a put-up job" to give Crump *raison d'être* for being in the immediate vicinity, nevertheless the little man was genuinely and deeply interested in his work.

He was in earnest conversation with Banks on the subject of azaleas when Esther emerged from the house. Her father had more than once remarked with pleasure on the deep interest that she took in the alterations. He was thankful for anything that occupied her mind.

Crump left Banks to join her. They strolled away together to the gate at the end of the drive. One glance at Esther was sufficient to tell that she had not recovered from the shock of that early morning. Her face was white; there was a nervous look in her dilated eyes.

"My father," she whispered, leaning on the close gate, "is making arrangements for poor Vance to go to the County asylum. She will probably be taken there this afternoon. It seems so dreadful; but I suppose—I suppose it's the only thing that can be done!"

"I'm afraid so," said Crump, "it is the best thing for the poor woman!"

He drew out the letter Tom Jackson had given him, and which he himself had inclosed in a plain envelope.

"I meant to have given you this this morning," he said, "that fine young fellow, Tom Jackson, gave it to me to give to you. I think both he and my nephew, Freddie, are going to be of assistance to us; but I'm going to ask you, Miss Mansfield, not to open that envelope just yet!"

Little dreaming what it contained, Esther thrust the envelope in the bosom of her dress.

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"I owe Jackson," she said, "a debt of gratitude that I shall never be able to pay!"

And then, for the first time, Crump learnt of the letter the young constable had brought Esther from Alec Scarsdale when he lay at Warham police-station, and of the letter he had taken back.

It had been a terrible breach of discipline that, had it been discovered, must have meant dismissal with ignominy for Jackson, but Crump was unconventional, and he was a private individual now. His face beamed.

"Very, very wrong of him," he said in a low voice, "from an official point of view—a most grievous breach of discipline, but—well, well! There are times when we violate the letter, but not the spirit of the law—and God bless Tom Jackson, say I, for his gross breach of discipline."

The little man coughed, looked rather ashamed of himself, and then glanced down the road, for the sharp clatter of hoofs, and the rattle of wheels had reached him. A moment later, a dog-cart, drawn by a high-stepping, spirited cob, and moving at a spanking pace, swung round into sight.

"Ah!" ejaculated Crump, "our friends from The Firs!"

Seaton Revelle, perched up high, and his shoulders well squared, his hands working a little from the strain on the reins, was looking just a trifle worn and tired. Mr. Faversham—otherwise Benny—beside him, was trying to look unconcerned and comfortable, but the high-spirited cob had got on his nerves. Not that he was a coward, but he was out of his element. He preferred his feet or a bicycle, infinitely, as methods of locomotion.

Revelle reined up opposite the gate. A slight expression of uneasiness flickered across Benny's face at sight of Esther. She pricked his conscience somehow—made him think of that poor fellow doing time in a convict prison. Revelle might "gas," and make out that she was beginning to forget all about him, but Benny did not believe it.

Revelle raised his hat with well-bred grace; Benny did likewise, but he lacked his companion's ease of manner.

"Good morning, Miss Mansfield!" said Revelle, then, with a nod to Crump, "Morning, Penworthy!"

"Good morning to you, sir!" said Crump, removing his broad-brimmed felt hat with just sufficient deference to imply that he realised that he was addressing a superior; then moved away and became apparently absorbed in contemplating a flower-bed, and took out a note-book. But he was just within ear-shot.

The cob showed a tendency, to Benny's infinite terror, to do a dance on its hind legs, but Revelle quieted him; then bent forward.

"Miss Mansfield," he said, "I've just heard from my fellow, Railton, about what's happened this morning—about that poor woman. I'm most frightfully distressed, especially after what happened last night."

Servants will talk, and tradesmen carry news from house to house, and it was already known that one of the servants at the Woodlands had gone out of her mind and had tried to commit suicide. Railton had heard the gossip, and had communicated it to his master as he set his breakfast.

Mr. Penworthy had evidently been seized with a brilliant idea, for he was pencilling vigorously in his note-book.

"Yes!" said Esther with a shudder, but looking at Revelle rather fixedly, "the poor woman's gone quite out of her mind. She again spoke of having made a mistake last night. Poor creature, she seems haunted by the remembrance of someone called 'Jim'!"

Every word reached Crump, he looked up for a moment from his note-book.

Whether it was due to some irritating fly, or whether Revelle jerked the cob's sensitive mouth, it would have been difficult to say; but the animal suddenly reared up on its hind legs.

"So, ho! Steady, steady, steady!"

Revelle's lips had tightened across his teeth. A few moments later he had the cob under control again. Benny was wishing to Heaven that he had some decent excuse to get down and walk.

"He's rather fresh this morning, Miss Mansfield," went on Revelle, "'Jim' you say? Poor woman! Have you been able to gather any particulars about her past?"

"No. Only she talks of this Jim! It seems that he was drowned. My father has made arrangements for her removal to the County asylum. It seems dreadful, but everybody says it is for the best!"

Revelle bent forward and smoothed the cob's flank with his whip. Esther could not see his eyes now. She had been watching the effects of her words all the while. Revelle's eyes—for all his mastery over himself—were bright with a look of relief. It looked as if he were going to weather the corner all right after all; mad, and packed away in the County asylum, this woman who had suddenly returned again into his life, and had threatened to topple to the ground all his ambitions and far-reaching schemes! His blood was pulsing with a savage thrill of exultation.

He was master of himself when he again glanced at Esther. For all her pallor and the dark rings round her eyes, how charming she looked! How graceful!

"Well, Miss Mansfield," he said, "we must be getting along. We're bound for the Towers—I've promised to see Normanhurst about this entertainment, and fix up details. I'm going to take charge of the aerial department"—he laughed—"the balloon will be captive during the greater portion of the day, and I'm going to take up parties, a guinea a head; then, if weather permits, I shall fly off in the afternoon. A lot of arranging to be done! It means a traction-engine and goodness only knows what. By-the-by, you're going to sing at the concert in the school-room?"

"Yes!"

"So's my friend here, Faversham. He's a funny fellow when it comes to the singing of a comic song!"

Crump smiled softly to himself.

Esther was again looking at Revelle.

Suddenly she saw his eyes dilate, and a curious greyness steal over his features.

He was looking beyond her, over her head, at something she did not see!

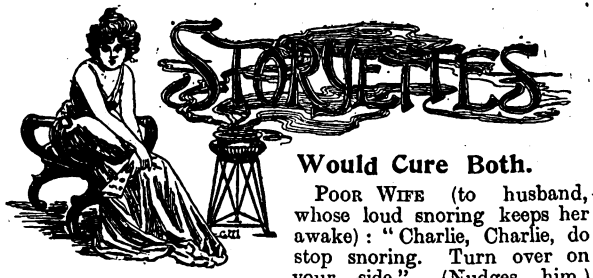
(To be continued.)

[Another splendid instalment in next Tuesday's *Short Stories.*]

HE: "I am very fond of you." She: "How well our tastes agree." He: "What, are you fond of me?" She: "Oh, no! Of myself."

LAWYER (meeting friend in street): "I'm sorry for you. Short, but Snipps, the tailor, has put his account against you in my hands for collection." Short: "And you're going to try and collect it, eh? Well, I'm sorry for you. Ta, ta, old man; you know my address."

"I SUPPOSE, Henry," said the old gentleman to the new son-in-law, "that you are aware the cheque for £5,000 I put among your wedding presents was merely for effect?" "Oh, yes, sir," responded the cheerful Henry, "and the effect was excellent. The bank cashed it this morning without a word."



Would Cure Both.

POOR WIFE (to husband, whose loud snoring keeps her awake): "Charlie, Charlie, do stop snoring. Turn over on your side." (Nudges him.) Husband, only half awake, grunts, turns on his side, and continues to snore. Wife has happy idea. Remembers a line from an article called "How to Prevent Snoring." Gives her husband a second nudge, which elicits another grunt. "Oh, Charlie. If you keep your mouth shut you'd be all right." Charlie (still semi-conscious): "So would you."

Old Gold Preferred.

MADGE: "Do you prefer blonde men?" Beatrice: "No, I prefer old gold—very old, and plenty of gold."

True, Isn't It?

EVERY woman is sorry for some other woman on account of something her husband told her about the other woman's husband.

Why She Was Sad.

MR. BILKINS: "What a sad face that woman has." Mrs. Bilkins: "Yes, poor thing. She has either loved and lost, or loved and got him."

A Cutting Remark.

HE: "Don't you think it wrong for people to marry their intellectual inferiors?" She: "Yes—always wrong, and in some cases quite impossible."

Glad to Lose Her.

NEIGHBOR: "And you expect to support my daughter on two pounds a week?" Clarkets: "Yes, sir." Neighbor: "Well, go ahead, my heart refuses, but my pocket-book consents. She costs me ten pounds."

A Delicate Difference.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, you wouldn't believe it, but it's true that these weights are so delicate that they mark the difference between a blonde and a brunette hair." "And which weighs the less?" "The lighter one."

Willing to Return Her.

FATHER (trying a would-be son-in-law): "Young man, will you be able to take care of my daughter in the style to which she has always been accustomed?" Young Man: "I'll guarantee it, sir, or return the girl. Come, it's a bargain."

Why they Disagreed.

PEACEMAKER: "But, my dear man, why cannot you and your wife agree to live in harmony?" Dear Man: "That's just it. I am agreed, but she isn't. I, of course, want her to harmonise with me, but she insists that I shall harmonise with her. Just like a woman, you know. Bound to have her own way."

An Excellent Plan.

MOTHER (anxiously): "I am told that your husband plays cards every night at the club; plays for money, too." Married Daughter: "That's all right. He gives me all his winnings——" "What, do you——" "And he always plays with Mr. Nexdoor." "What difference can that make?" "Mrs. Nexdoor makes her husband give her his winnings, too, and then she gives the money to me, and I hand her what my husband has won from hers, and so we both have about twice as much money as we could get out of them otherwise."

Too Severe a Test.

SWEET GIRL: "Is your love for me absolutely unselfish?" Adorer: "Absolutely." Sweet Girl: "Then I wish you'd go somewhere else to-night. Jack Hansom promised to call."

Too Old for a Sister.

"No," said Miss Elder, kindly, but firmly, "I cannot marry you, but I'll be a——" "Thanks, Miss Elder," interrupted the rejected one, spitefully, "but I have two grandmothers."

Lost Her Bet.

HER MOTHER: "I saw him kiss you. I am terribly shocked. I did not for a moment imagine he would take such a liberty!" Herself: "Nor did I, ma. In fact, I bet him he daren't."

Pressing Business.

TRAVIS: "But really you must excuse me now, gentlemen, I have pressing business elsewhere." Bloodgood (aside to Selby): "What he says is true. This is the evening when Travis calls on his girl."

Simplest of All.

PRETTY WIFE: "I knew you'd like this new hat, darling. It is so becoming, and nothing could be simpler, could it?" Darling (thoughtfully): "Nothing, except the man that has to pay a guinea for it."

Ready for Emergencies.

FIRST TRAVELLER: "Does your daughter speak the languages?" Second Traveller: "Not to any extent! She can say 'yes,' though, in five of them, in case any foreign nobleman should ask her to marry him."

Didn't Work.

HE: "How charming you look, dear, in that new dress It becomes you admirably." She: "Oh, yes! That's an old story. When the season is changing you always discover how charming I am in my old clothes!"

A Terrible Disease.

NEARLY every man has the collecting fever at least one time in his life. It may be coins, or it may be foreign stamps, but the very worst form of the disease is that which comes when he is vainly trying to collect money enough to pay his bills.

Hints on Health.

DON'T shake a hornet's nest to see if any of the family are at home. Don't try to take the right of way from an express train at a railway crossing. Don't hold a wasp by the other end while you thaw it out in front of the fire to see if it is alive.

Cards and Cards.

THE deacon's wife wanted to jot down the text, and leaning over to her scapegrace nephew, she whispered: "Have you a card about you?" "You can't play in church," was the solemn, reproving answer; and the good woman was so confused that she forgot all about the text.

A Safer Purchase.

"ONE strong point about this broom," said the grocer, "is the handle. It is made of tough, seasoned wood. You could knock a man down with it, and not break it." "I think," observed Mr. Enpecque timidly, "I would—hum—prefer one with a fragile handle, if you please."

Her Wish Was Granted.

"OH, I think it must be so nice to be connected with a newspaper," said Miss M[illegible]nn to young Quilldriver, as they sat together one evening. "Yes, it is so," he replied. "But why do you think it is?" "Why, it has so many advantages. I should think you would glory in the freedom, the power, the liberty, and all the privileges of the Press." "Certainly I do. It's a pity with all your enthusiasm on the subject that you are not a journalist." "I think so too; but you know it is hard for a woman to get recognition. I should be delighted to feel that the Press embraced me." "Oh, you would, would you? Great Scott! wait till I turn down the gas."

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An Old Maid's Ring.

A Charming Little Narrative of Two Love Affairs.

"My dear sir," said the old gentleman, looking over the rims of his eye-glasses at his nephew, who stood on the other side of the table at which the uncle was seated, "if you persist——"

It was an ominous sign when Mr. John Craddock addressed his nephew as "my dear sir," and the break-off of the sentence was still more ominous. Stephen Burrell recognised that the crisis had come, and there was a momentary sinking of his heart; but this transient sentiment left him more determined than ever.

"I am in love with Katie, sir, and I intend to marry her!" he responded in a firm tone.

The questioning look in Mr. Craddock's eyes died away, and its place was taken by an expression of anger.

"If you marry Miss Holmes in spite of my disapproval, you take the consequences. You had better make up your mind at once, because I would rather that you leave the house as soon as you can if you act contrary to my wishes!" cried Mr. John Craddock wrathfully, his temper getting the best of him.

"Very well, sir!" was the calm rejoinder. "I will leave to-day!"

He turned on his heel and strode from the room. He heard his uncle say something; it sounded like "ungrateful rascal," but he took no notice.

By evening he was clear of the house, he and his few belongings, and located in rooms in another part of the town. Then Stephen Burrell had time to reflect. He had expected trouble in abundance when he announced his determination to act contrary to his uncle's desires, but he had only vaguely supposed that the old gentleman would go so far as to turn him out. That was what it amounted to, set down in cold black and white.

He was the orphan son of a younger sister of John Craddock, a bachelor, and had been brought up by him as an engineer; he had proved his fitness for the profession, and had great hopes of rising in it, but as yet he was young and his income from his profession was not large. Katie would not have the same social position as she would have enjoyed had Mr. Craddock relented, but there was enough to live on in a small way; he would get on in course of time, and money was not everything. He would prefer to forego the undoubted advantages of being Craddock's nephew and heir rather than give up Katie; and he fully believed that she would be happy with him and regret nothing.

"Ungrateful rascal!" That was rather hard on Stephen, but it might seem to uncle John that it was quite correct. Still, uncle John should be reasonable. Why should he wish to make his nephew miserable? Katie was poor, and uncle John was hoping and expecting that he would marry a girl in his, Mr. Craddock's, station of life—perhaps the daughter of a nobleman. Money will often buy a title!

Katie had to be informed of what had happened. She looked sad, and, after a moment, tears came into her eyes.

"But, surely," began Stephen wonderingly, "you don't regret the money? You want me for myself, don't you?"

"How could you think otherwise?" asked Katie reproachfully. There was a pause, for you cannot expect a girl (or anyone else) to speak while a strong arm is squeezing her waist and a pair of lips are pressed against hers. "I mean—— How rough you are, Steve! I shan't come near you if——Keep back, now!"

As Steve approached her, and she backed towards the door. "I mean, I am sorry to have been the cause of your losing a fortune and a chance of getting on more rapidly in your profession!" And again the sad expression overshadowed her pretty face.

"You needn't be sorry in the least about that! I had to choose between that and you, and I selected the better part. So long as *you* do not mind the loss—do you, Katie?"

He approached her with outstretched arms and such an appealing expression of inquiry that she really hadn't the heart to wave him back.

"Then we will be married as soon as we can get the necessary preparations completed—the house and all that. It's lonely for you, Katie, here in lodgings, with that old landlady, and going backwards and forwards to an office every morning."

"I don't go backwards to the office!" retorted Katie, with assumed innocence, for which she naturally had to pay the lover's penalty.

"I wonder why uncle John developed into a crusty bachelor?" said Stephen Burrell thoughtfully. "Why didn't he marry?"

"Perhaps he fell in love with a girl who wouldn't have him?" suggested Katie.

"Ah! That would be enough to make any fellow crabbed!" agreed Steve cordially.

"I have a maiden aunt," said Katie, "but she isn't at all sour; just the very opposite. She lives in Yorkshire, and I haven't seen her for ten years, I daresay. But she is a dear old thing, and if she had money she would always be doing good with it. A woman like that ought not to have been passed over. I wonder why she didn't marry?"

As Stephen could not answer that question, he said nothing and the matter dropped.

It took longer than either the lovers thought to make what Steve had termed "the necessary preparations," but all was in readiness at last, and the two young people were having their last chat before meeting on the wedding eve.

Steve had asked her once more to assure him that she did not love him less on account of his fall from fortune, and Katie had once more expressed the hope that he would not regret the choice he had made.

"Money is not so powerful as it is supposed to be," said Steve earnestly. "The true love of a good woman will do more than any amount of money can do for a man; she will help him in his difficulties, console him in distress or defeat, encourage him to go on, and make home a little paradise for him to return to after the wanderings and worries of that crooked path which we call 'business.' The fact that you marry me without fortune shows that you love me for myself alone, and I regret nothing! I shall never regret, for I shall never grow weary of my dear wife!"

And in her turn she said:

"You have made a great sacrifice, Steve, dear, for the love of me, and such a sacrifice can only strengthen the love of a woman for him who makes it! Why should I be sorry for the loss of money?"

Brave words on either side, but would the vicissitudes of life bring about a change?

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A piece of wedding-cake and a card were sent to uncle John, but he tossed it into the fire, as he had done with the letter Steve sent him to tell him the date and place of the wedding, and to ask him to be present. The young couple hoped that uncle John might relent, but he did not.

Four years went by with a rapidity that appeared surprising to Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Burrell when they looked back; but in reality the time had been tolerably long and had brought changes, successes and disappointments, as it does to most mortals. For the first twelve months the course of life and love had run smoothly enough, but after the expiration of the first year there came a change.

The anticipated rise in the profession had not come so quickly as it should, in justice to his abilities; so thought Steve, and there was a good deal of truth in this opinion, but Steve had yet to learn that a man is not absolutely certain to obtain a reward according to his merits. The increasing expense of the household did not make things any the more smooth, and the further additional increase at the end of the third year did not mend matters. There grew up within the recesses of Stephen Burrell's heart a feeling that he had not done well in taking John Craddock so quickly at his word. The old man might have changed his mind if they had waited—Steve began to include Katie in his own action—and in any case it would have been better to wait. Perhaps, and this was a thought which he at first scarcely dared to permit for a moment in his mind, he himself might have changed! His cheeks flushed when the thought first came to him, but it came again and again until he began to feel pretty certain that he would have changed had he waited.

On her side, Katie could not help feeling at times that a little larger income would be a blessing. It was a disappointment to her that Steve had not made more headway in his profession, although she was far from blaming him. She still loved him as much as ever. How different it might have been had uncle John relented! But he had never given any sign of life from that day to this. Perhaps the cares of a mother told upon her temper a little, and she was, unconsciously, less careful about making things at home so comfortable as they used to be. Steve thought she was sorry that she had wedded a man who was *not* John Craddock's heir, and that made things worse. Katie noticed the change in him and believed that he regretted the sacrifice he had made in marrying her, and that imbittered her existence and gradually engendered resentment.

"I did not ask him to do it!" she would murmur.

And so love cooled, and during the fourth year there had been many jangles and their marriage appeared to be one of those that should be classed under the head of "failures."

The fault of these two young people was the very common one of allowing the cares of life to swamp the love which was strong enough to have carried them through life happily. The man, often the weaker vessel in such circumstances, was the first to succumb, and the woman went down with him. But in their case a fortunate incident was to save them from the fate that befalls so many couples.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Katie. She had received a letter and the exclamation was caused by the news contained therein. "You remember my mentioning my maiden aunt, Steve?"

"Yes," answered her husband slowly.

Both experienced a sensation of discomfort, because they so well remembered the occasion on which the maiden aunt was mentioned. How full of love for each other they were then!

"She is dead!" pursued Katie. "I must say I'm dreadfully sorry, although I haven't seen her for so long. Well, this letter says that she has left no estate, because she purchased a small annuity many years ago, and it dies with her. But I am the only surviving member of our family, so they are sending Aunt Martha's belongings on to me."

"They don't amount to much, I suppose?" asked Steve with a smile.

"Oh, they don't mean furniture and ordinary things! I shouldn't know what to do with *those!* But a box containing little trinkets and so on. The other things will be given away to neighbours, as the old lady desired. I don't understand it exactly, but the box will come and the old lady is dead and buried, so I couldn't do any good if I went to Yorkshire."

Steve had to go away for a week on a contract which he had in hand, so he was away when the box arrived. Katie lost no time in opening it and examining the contents. Another letter inclosed in the box gave her some particulars of her aunt's benevolent character, and stated that death came suddenly.

Katie turned over the few things tenderly, mentally assigning a place for each in her own home. She came upon a little rosewood box, of antique pattern; it was locked, and there was no key. Naturally, she wanted it open; she reflected that the locks of such boxes were generally alike, and that she had a key that had opened her mother's rosewood box.

The key fitted, and the contents of the box were disclosed. A faded bunch of flowers, so old that they dropped to pieces as she lifted them—perhaps they were in pieces before she touched them—some tiny ribbons, and other trifles; then an envelope, open, containing another envelope, and a sheet of paper with a few lines on it. She took out the paper and read:

> "I thought to return the ring, but at the last moment my courage failed. It is all that is left of the happiness that lasted so short a time. Oh, Jack, may you never regret your choice of money in preference to love. I pray this for your sake, that you may ever be happy and not have your life imbittered by the thought that you made an unwise choice! I trust that no reflection of my sorrow will reach you; I want you to be happy, and it will soften the pain at my own heart if I know that you are happy."

Katie looked at the date; the lines were more than forty years old. She drew forth the letter; the envelope was addressed and stamped, ready for posting. She noticed that the stamp was the old red one of Queen Victoria, like those she had seen in an album. The letter was sealed, and there was something in it—the ring, most probably.

"Poor Aunt Martha!" murmured Katie softly. "She was much upset to think of sending the ring in a letter with a penny stamp. I suppose her 'Jack' is dead. I wonder who he was? Why, of course, it's here on the envelope!"

She looked and uttered a cry, for she saw "Mr. John Craddock."

Katie's hand trembled. This was the secret of John Craddock's bachelorhood! He had fallen in love with a girl who was poor, and had given her up on that account. Why?

"I'll take it to him!" declared Katie with swift resolve. "I have never seen him, and he won't know me until I make myself known. I think it is due to Aunt Martha."

When John Craddock was told that a lady had called to see him with a message from Miss Martha Norton, he nearly jumped from his seat.

"How old is she?" he demanded.

"Under thirty, sir."

"H'm! Show her in here!" commanded Craddock, relieved. He had suspected that it was his old love herself.

Martha! He lost himself in a reverie and did not hear the entrance of the visitor. His brain was in a whirl; it all came back to him with a rush. A slight cough brought him back.

"Pray be seated," he said, offering Katie a chair. He seated himself opposite her, and so uncle and niece faced each other, the former unconscious of the relationship and the latter trying to sum him up in her mind.

"This letter came to me in a little rosewood box that belonged to my aunt, Mr. Craddock," said Katie, while she was taking the letter from the wrapper. "It is addressed to you. It is very old."

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"Belonged!" cried Craddock, catching at the word. "Then Martha—she is dead?"

"My aunt died three weeks ago, Mr. Craddock. Here it is!"

He took the sealed envelope; his hand trembled so violently that he could hardly hold it. Oblivious of Katie's presence, he tore open the envelope, took out something in wool, and then the letter, which he read with unconcealed emotion. When he had finished he took out the ring and gazed at it. A moment later he buried his face in his hands and wept.

"I ought to be ashamed of my weakness in front of a stranger, perhaps," he said, when he could speak. "But you are her niece and—married?" (Katie nodded). "Then you know what love means; at least, I suppose so. I was in love with your aunt and would have married her, but the pride of wealth spoilt all. I had it instilled into me by my relatives that I ought not to make a *mésalliance* and that I could improve my own position greatly by marrying money. I threw over your aunt and prepared to marry money. But I never married; I saw the hollowness of such marriages and I remained a bachelor. After that, to drown my feelings, I schemed in every way to make more money. I thrust out all the softening influences of your aunt's memory, and incased myself in cold cynicism about 'matrimony in a cottage' and all similar cheap sneers usually indulged in by people who know nothing about it, and I also armour-plated myself in the love of gold. I did all that until it became a second nature; I fully believed it. The awakening has come with that letter."

"Here are a few lines written by my aunt after sealing that letter," said Katie calmly. She meant him to have a full dose of the medicine that was proving so curative.

Craddock read the lines already quoted. They seemed to make him calmer.

"All this demonstrates to the full what I gave up for money," he said quietly. "There is nothing to equal a true womanly love. Some women forget after marriage" (Kate winced, it struck her rather nearly), "but your aunt was not like that, I am confident."

"I—I have nothing more to stop for, I think," said Katie nervously. She wanted to make herself known, but hesitated.

"Tell me all you know about her first, Mrs.—— I fancy that your name was not given to me, madam."

"Mrs. Stephen Burrell."

Again Craddock sprang from his seat in amazement. He hesitated a moment, as if ashamed, and then held out his hand.

"I am having my sins brought home to me all at once. Will you forgive me?"

Stephen Burrell was not made acquainted with the foregoing episode for a fortnight, for on the very same day he met with a severe accident and was taken to a hospital. It was during that illness that he realised how he had fallen from the high ideal of love that had possessed him four years ago.

"I haven't been quite so good to you, Katie, dear, as I ought to have been, but I'll make amends if I get better. I——"

"You *will* get better, Steve, so don't worry. I want you to get strong, for I have something to tell you."

"Who is looking after the children?" he queried with sudden fear that she had bad news to tell him.

She saw his anxiety and decided to tell him the news at once; it would not excite him more than his fear for the little ones.

"Uncle John is taking care of them, Steve!"

He opened his eyes in wonder. And then she told him.

"But I am not sure that he will leave you all his money, Steve," she added with a smile. "He is beginning to regard money as a great evil, and may only give us a little."

"I don't care!" replied Steve earnestly. "I have learnt something from the love affair of Uncle John and Aunt Martha, Katie!"

"So have I, dear," she said kissing him. **R. Pascoe.**

Your Editor Chats.

It is not customary for editors to take readers into their confidence, but I propose to depart from the usual practice and to tell my readers something interesting about the paper and about those responsible for certain of the contents.

To begin with, I know for a fact from correspondence that a large number of readers believe that "Madge Morris" (who conducts the feature "In Confidence") is the *non-de-plume* of some unknown writer. This, however, is not so. Miss Madge Morris is a well-known contributor to many of the publications which issue from the same offices as *Short Stories*, and quite an air of romance surrounds her recent history. More than a year ago she became engaged to a young man whose financial position did not admit of his marrying for some considerable time. He was a clerk in the City, and his income was a very modest one, with no prospect of an increase for some time to come. Miss Morris, however, decided that if her *fiancé* single-handed could not make sufficient money to get married on, she herself would contribute to the common fund. Her parents, though, would not allow her to become a shop girl, or to go into trade in any shape or form, so she tried her hand at writing. Her first articles were produced in *Pearson's Weekly*, and she showed herself so capable as an expert on love affairs that I decided to allow her to conduct the new feature, "In Confidence." And I have been very pleased at the result. I have in my possession dozens of letters from readers whose love troubles have been cleared up by Miss Morris, and this fact is gratifying in the extreme. Miss Morris has saved up a good deal of money by now, and will, she hopes get married in the autumn.

This, then, is quite a little true romance, which few of those who read Miss Morris's writings would suspect. I have given you only a bare outline. There is much more to tell—more about her early life, about the romantic way in which she met her lover, about her home life—all of which would take too long to tell here, but which I hope some day you will learn from her own pen.

Few of those who read the stories in this paper realise the conditions under which some of them have been written. "Truth is stranger than fiction," and one day I will tell you some true stories about some of the authors who have written stories for *Short Stories* that will bring tears to your eyes.

In the meantime I want you to do your best to help to make *Short Stories* better known. No paper can be *too* successful. *Short Stories* is a huge success, but some people are never satisfied—and I'm afraid I'm one of them.

How can you help? Well, the best possible way is by getting one, just *one* personal friend of yours to take in the paper regularly. If you do that, I will thank you most sincerely.

Your Editor.

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Mr. Methuselah.

Telling Why He Took a Fortnight's Holiday.

By Richard Barker Shelton.

THERE was an air of subdued excitement in the Bank. For the third time Billy Reynolds, lounging in the window as he pored over the sporting page of the morning paper, looked up at the clock and then at the little group perched on a table, and said: "Where in thunder is Mr. Methuselah?" For the third time the wagging heads of the group announced their ignorance.

It was twenty minutes to nine, and, according to all precedent, the paying out clerk was already a half hour late. Ned Frost slipped down from his perch on the table.

"Don't suppose old Methuselah's getting dissipated, do you?" he asked, with grave anxiety.

"Perhaps he bought a ticket to the theatre yesterday and hasn't recovered from the shock," Sam Paine ventured.

"More likely he heard a joke and sat up all night trying to arrive at the point," put in George Hardy.

"Maybe he's sick," suggested Billy from behind the paper.

"He'd come to work in anything but a hearse," said Paine grimly.

Billy rose from the window.

"It's ten minutes to nine," said he, "Where in creation is Methuselah?"

He folded the paper and put it into his pocket. "Go you three to one, George, he comes in late."

Hardy was considering this proposition when Mr. Greer, the cashier, came in.

"Clark," he said briskly, "you'll have to take the paying out clerk's window for a couple of weeks or so. Mr.—er—Mr.—er—Methuselah"—the word came grudgingly—"is to be away for awhile." He went into the back room, and the group about the table looked at one another in amazement.

"Must be sick," Billy Reynolds asserted.

"Did you hear the old man, though?" said Frost. "Called him Mr. Methuselah, by George!"

"Don't believe he remembers his name," said Paine. "Generally gets over it with a 'Mr.—er—er' something like that."

"What is his real name, anyway?" said Hardy.

"Jones, isn't it?" said Billy Reynolds doubtfully.

"Jones or something similar," Hardy prompted.

"Methuselah's a surer one," said Frost.

All that morning, through the routine work of the Bank, there was a feeling, shared alike by every man in the Bank, that something was lacking.

It must be admitted that the paying out clerk was not a popular man. He never went to the football games; he never joked; he never bought chances in the raffles. Yet, for all that, he was considered a fixture at the Bank, as much of a fixture as the arithmometers or the brass screens. One would have as soon expected the vaults to take a vacation as Mr. Methuselah. As to where that name originated it would be difficult to determine, but the name was more or less of a fit, for the paying out clerk was little and round-shouldered and baldheaded. His face was wizened and wrinkled, and, although it is probable he was not far beyond forty, his beard was very gray.

At closing time that afternoon Paine went over to Frost's desk. "Going to the match?" said he.

"Wait a minute or two, will you?" Frost answered. "See'f I can find this shortage. Somehow I'm excited without old Methuselah here."

Billy Reynolds was done early next morning, lounging in the window, as usual, with the morning paper. He glanced over the upper edge and saw Hardy come in.

"What do you suppose has got into the old codger?" Frost asked, as they took a 'bus a half hour later. "When he begins to take a vacation I feel all broken up myself."

Paine laughed. "Say," said he, "imagine old Methuselah trying to enjoy himself. It would take about three funerals a day to keep him in his normal condition."

"We'll probe him when he gets back," said Frost. "If he tells us anything, it'll be the truth."

"Yes, if he tells us anything," Paine assented.

The wonder occasioned by Mr. Methuselah's departure had not subsided when, at the expiration of the two weeks he returned, the same round-shouldered, baldheaded Methuselah, yet with an air of sprightliness and decision about him which was at once new and perplexing.

As Ned Frost put it: "I'm hanged if I know what it is, but something has happened."

Several days went past, and other changes were noted in the paying out clerk. His reserve had disappeared. Once even he essayed a ponderous witticism. Then came the most startling development of all.

The boys were washing up one afternoon when they heard an apologetic cough behind them, and, turning, saw Mr. Methuselah twirling his hat and looking decidedly ill at ease. It took several moments of preliminary humming and hawing before he found the courage to address them.

"Boys, I—I want to make a bargain with you," he began nervously. "I hope it won't appear foolish, you know, but I want to ask you to drop that Methuselah. Never minded it before, you know, but now somehow I do. If it's all the same to you, I wish you'd call me Mr. James instead." He paused and brushed imaginary specks from the hat. "If you will, we'll all go to the football game this afternoon."

"We'll—what?" said Sam Paine, dropping the soap on to the floor.

"All go to the football game with me," Mr. Methuselah repeated.

"Say it again, will you?" said Billy Reynolds, with his hand behind his ear.

"All go to the match with me," Mr. Methuselah reiterated. "I hope it's a bargain," he added eagerly.

"Why, certainly," said Ned Frost. "Never meant any offence, you know. Names are all one to us. Quite as soon call you Mr. James as the other, Mr. Meth—er—Mr. James, I mean."

"Thanks," with evident relief. "And you'll join me at the match?"

Mr. Methuselah made his exit amid a varied chorus of "Certainly," "Of course," "With pleasure."

"Strikes me, George," said he, "that Methuselah was pretty lively for a man just getting over rheumatic fever."

"Appendicitis, you mean," Hardy corrected.

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"He told me himself it was rheumatic fever," Billy protested.

"Well, he described the rigors of appendicitis very vividly to me," said Hardy.

Billy Reynolds gave a low whistle of surprise. "The old fossil's been stringing us," said he, "and botching it like an amateur too."

"Let's find out what he told the others," said Hardy.

The following day was overcast, and at closing time great sheets of rain were rattling down. The paying out clerk had just slipped into his overcoat when he found a half dozen very solemn-faced young men before him.

"We are here," began Sam Paine, as spokesman of the group, "to state a few facts as given out by yourself, Mr. Methus—er—James, and to ask you to reconcile them if you will."

Paine cleared his throat, and Methuselah, looking very much like an animal at bay, mumbled, "Go on."

"It seems," Paine continued, "that while away recently you had a serious attack of appendicitis, according to your statement to Mr. Harvey, and at the same time you had the misfortune (this is what you told Billy Reynolds) to be said up with rheumatic fever. Moreover, if we are to take into consideration statements made to Mr. Frost and myself respectively, you suffered the pangs of heart failure and were threatened with pneumonia of the right lung. We want to congratulate you on a constitution which could bring you safely through these complications. But, with all these ills your flesh was heir to, you enjoyed immensely a fortnight at the seaside (remember what you told Mr. Clark), and, although you spent the entire two weeks there (this next is from Mr. Gray), it did not deter you from passing a most delightful fortnight at Old Orchard. Pardon us if we question how you managed to do all these extraordinary things at one and the same time."

At first Mr. Methuselah's face was a study of wrath. Then his eyes roved about wildly, as if he were contemplating flight. At the end of the speech he leant against the wall, white and shaken.

"I—I——" he began. "It's none of your confounded business!" he blurted out. He turned on his heel and angrily snatched the cover from his umbrella. As he did so a stream of small white kernels fell to the floor.

"Rice, by Jove!" some one gurgled.

On one side Mr. Methuselah, and on the other the group of a half dozen stood staring stupidly at the white grains. Ned Frost was the first to rise to the situation. He stepped forward, slipping his arm through Mr. Methuselah's, and, as he led him away he told the boys over his shoulder that he knew a quiet place down the street.

F. Hope.

MRS. WOBBLES: "I shall never forget, dear, how idiotic you looked when you proposed to me." Mr. Wobbles (with emphasis): "I was idiotic."

SHE: "Do you believe one's fate can be read in the hand, as people say?" He: "To a certain extent. Give me your hand, for instance, and I can tell that your fate will be sure to be a happy one."

A JOLLY old doctor said that people who were prompt in their payments always recovered in their sickness, as they were good customers and physicians could not afford to lose them. A good hint and a sensible doctor.

BRIDE: "Why, mamma, what *are* you crying for? Everything is *so* lovely, and everybody's been *so* good to me! Come and look at my presents, dear!" The Wise Mamma: "It's the presents I'm thinking of! Every family with a regiment of unmarried girls has sent you the most horribly expensive things—and now they'll all be getting married, and you and Charlie will have to scrape and starve to give each of them something handsomer still! Presents! Oh, Angelina, why didn't you elope?"

Women Who Teach Royalty.

The governesses to the Queen of Holland and the King of Spain were English ladies. This is proof that English women are well to the fore in the race for success. Thousands of women have been successful owing to being strengthened and made fit for their daily work by Bile Beans for Biliousness. Mrs. Gertrude Morley, of Crown Street, Awsworth, near Ilkeston, began to be troubled by anæmia when eighteen years of age. The anæmia became chronic, and lasted for four years. Sleep afforded her no benefit. She always felt tired and weary as though she would like to lie down and not get up any more. She also suffered most severely from constipation. She lost all relish for food, as well as the ability to digest it. One day her husband bought a box of Bile Beans. His wife took them regularly, and before the box was finished she felt a great improvement in her condition. She continued with the Beans, taking them regularly, and her improvement became more and more rapid. The distressing constipation left her; once more she felt a desire for food, and she found herself capable both of enjoying and digesting it. She is now completely cured and recommends Bile Beans whenever she hears of a person suffering from anæmia and debility. Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain cure for indigestion, anæmia, constipation, piles, debility, pimples, skin eruptions, palpitation, headache, liver and kidney disorders, nervousness, all female ailments. All chemists stock Bile Beans, or they may be had post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, London, E.C. Housewives and governesses have by them been benefited alike.

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Two on a Tandem.

A Fortunate Spill which Set the Wedding Bells Ringing.

"Gone with Shingleton! Why Marjorie promised to go on my tandem months ago. Only last night I told her to be ready at two o'clock!"

"Very likely, but that was before Mr. Shingleton invited her to accompany him on his motor car."

"Asked you!" the young man retorted savagely.

"Whether Mr. Shingleton asked Marjorie or asked me is immaterial. Marjorie has sufficient good sense to be guided by her mother in such matters."

John Amhurst strode towards the door without the smallest attempt at concealing the annoyance which he felt.

"And now, my dear John," the lady continued, regardless of his apparent haste, "as we are alone let me take this opportunity of telling you that I consider it desirable that you should see less of Marjorie. Boy and girl attachments are all very well, up to a certain point; serve to keep a young man out of mischief, and relieve the monotony of a girl's life, but such attachments should not be carried to a point at which they are likely to prove objectionable to an eligible suitor."

"You don't mean to say that Mr. Shingleton wishes to marry Marjorie?" Amhurst gasped.

"He certainly does, and why shouldn't he?"

"Because he's old enough to be her grandfather, for one thing. Wears a wig and paints his face——"

"Mr. Shingleton is a well-preserved man—handsome many would say—who has arrived at years of discretion, and made his mark in the world."

"He certainly appears to have made money, if that is what you mean by making a mark. But what does Marjorie say? Is she a willing victim to the altar of mammon?"

"Marjorie is too dutiful a daughter to oppose her mother's wish. I consider the match in every way desirable, and wish it."

"Well, however desirable a husband Mr. Shingleton may be, he is certainly the most undesirable pilot that motor-car ever carried. If Marjorie comes home alive I shall be surprised."

With this parting stab at maternal instinct John Amhurst hurried from the house, mounted the motor-tandem with empty seat behind, and started at a headlong pace for Barton Hall, the afternoon's *rendezvous* of the Sussex Automobile Club.

For the first time in his life the course of love ran ruffled. As girl and boy Marjorie Daine and he had been playmates. Marjorie was the magnet that had drawn him, fresh from his articles in a London solicitor's office, to establish a slow growing practice in the sleepy Sussex village. Full of confidence in the reciprocation of his unspoken love he had scarcely given a thought to the possibility of a rival; less still to the wealthy stranger who had built himself a hideous red-brick mansion on the outskirts of the village, and aped the ways of a country gentleman.

The jealous fear that burnt in the heart of the rider lent wings to the labouring engine. A wild desire to overtake the motor-car and prevent the inevitable *tête-à-tête*, till he had made one passionate appeal, covered the miles at the topmost speed of petrol and pedal. But, though he knew it not, the interval of waiting, and the bad quarter of an hour he had just passed through, had been deliberately planned, with the object of preventing his overtaking the car.

Shingleton was not given to furious driving, nor indeed to driving a motor-car at all. He was out without his driver for the first time that day, and wisely contented himself with a modest, and strictly legal, eight miles an hour. Had Amhurst contented himself with even the twelve, which the law allows, he would in all probability have overtaken the car at the end of the first hour, in spite of maternal forethought which had given it a start of half as much.

But love is impetuous, the more so when it fears a rival, and so for half an hour the tandem sped at double the legal limit. Then came a sudden stop as a squad of police lined up across the road. Another precious fifteen minutes the angry rider lost endeavouring to explain that twenty-four miles an hour was a bare ten, ere he gave his name and was suffered to depart.

Heedless of the law, the next five miles was covered in record time; then from the summit of a hill Amhurst caught a glimpse of the big car trundling along half a mile ahead. Five minutes more, even at the reduced speed which the sharp twisting descent before him would have suggested at any other time, would have taken him alongside it. But to the jealous lover, conscious of precious minutes wasted, each second was of vital importance. The irrevocable word which would wreck his life's happiness might be spoken at any moment, and casting caution to the wind, he committed the unchecked tandem to the mercy of the hill.

Almost as soon as taken, the rash resolve was regretted. The first bend of the road disclosed a waggon at rest, with panting team stretched across the track, and not an inch to spare on either side. To stop the machine already outrunning the engine, by suddenly applying the break, was as sure a way to disaster as collision with heavy vehicle or horses. Warned by the sound of the motor-horn the carter struggled too late to clear a path. As if by magic the few yards of intervening road vanished under the wheels of the flying tandem.

Yet in the few seconds of anticipation which preceded the impending crash, Amhurst summed up the situation with legal precision. There were two alternatives, a collision with waggon and team or a dash at the ditch. Either meant the wreck of the tandem, but whereas the first would probably cast him in damages to the owner of the team, the latter would, with luck, cast him into the hedge only. He chose the latter course and charged the ditch six feet in front of the plunging team.

Full of anxious solicitude, the waggoner helped him from his prickly couch, and the two lifted the tandem from the ditch. To Amhurst's unspeakable joy the machine was uninjured, and with scarce a word of reproach to the cause of his spill, he mounted and rode off.

But at the end of a mile the engine showed signs of failure. Weak explosions came at irregular intervals, and finally ceased. A hasty examination discovered the cause of failure. The petrol tank was empty. Whilst the tandem lay on its

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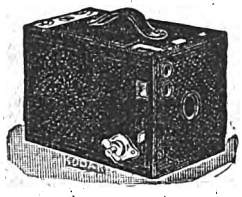

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side in the ditch the oil had escaped, leaving only sufficient to carry it thus far. Two miles off the road to Barton Hall lay the nearest village where more could be obtained.

Amongst the automobiles drawn up in front of Barton Hall, Amhurst, who arrived ten minutes behind it, recognised the big 24 h.p. car, painted a brilliant red and shimmering with polished brass like a fire engine, which had carried the couple he sought. But neither Marjorie nor Shingleton were amongst the guests grouped on lawn or terrace.

With the intention of making a systematic search he started round the extensive grounds, but once more that day Fate was against him. Scarcely had he gone a step when he found himself face to face with Dolly Hamilton. The young lady had, as she promptly informed him, driven to the Hall with her brother. Unattached men were scarce that afternoon, and for the rest of the day he was Dolly's prisoner.

Once or twice as they wandered through the gardens Amhurst caught a passing glance of Marjorie and Shingleton. To his eager, jealous eye a multitude of signs carried conviction that his worst fear was realised. In Shingleton's pompous air of proprietorship he read the accepted lover. And Marjorie, she looked a trifle agitated, resigned rather than happy, he thought.

But the weariest day must have an end. Hamilton, full of brotherly wrath at the hours he had been kept waiting, at last carried Dolly off, and Amhurst was alone with his aching heart.

He was the last of the guests to leave the Hall, and just in front of him, in the long line of automobiles making for the Park gate was the great red car of evil destiny. He wondered what his feelings would have been at the moment had he managed to overtake it earlier in the day.

As he wondered the car passed through the gate, and, badly handled, turned too abruptly. Its front wheels ran into the ditch at the road side and its two passengers were shot out. Ere the luckless driver could scramble from the ditch Amhurst had flung himself from the tandem and extricated Marjorie.

Thanks to the soft resting-place each had found, neither was injured. But with the heavy car it fared not so well. When at last, with the help of a group of grinning rustics, it stood upon the road once more, both front wheels were found to be hopelessly buckled.

The vacant seat on the tandem offered the only means by which Marjorie could reach home that night, and with chilling courtesy vehicle and driver were placed at the lady's disposal.

Standing by the side of the wrecked car Shingleton watched the tandem till it disappeared round a bend of the road, as full of jealous rage as Amhurst.

For a mile the tandem sped silently through the twilight, then a voice from the back seat sobbed, "Oh, Jack, don't be angry. Mother made me do it."

"I'm not angry," was the reply, in tone that belied the words. "I congratulate you!"

"Congratulate me, upon what?"

"Didn't old Shingleton ask you to marry him?"

"No, he didn't!"

Jack pedalled hard for the next mile, though neither the running of the tandem nor the gradient of the road called for such exertion.

"I m afraid your mother will be disappointed."

"Yes, mother will be disappointed. She told me that if I had an offer this afternoon I was to accept—and I haven't had one yet."

There was an accent on the last word that set Jack's heart bounding with hope.

"But I don't understand," he gasped. "Your mother told me——"

"Jack, he didn't get a chance."

"Marjorie, you wouldn't think of disobeying your mother."

"Oh, no, Jack!"

Jack was a nervous fellow, and for a time he pedalled in silence, then without turning his head, he blurted out, "Will you marry me, Marjorie?"

"You don't deserve it, Jack," was the reply; "neglecting opportunities as you do. But I suppose I must do as mother told me."

A. Clarke Little.

AN ALLIANCE IN LOVE.

"So it seems we are both engaged to him, Mabel?" observed Miss Pauline.

"Apparently; I know that I am," answered Mabel.

"And I know that I am. Why, our rings are just alike."

"He must buy them by the dozen."

"Why, even the dates on them are the same."

"That's true. He proposed to me just before the German band began."

"And to me just after. What a wretch!"

"It's too bad. He was the only man I was engaged to last summer that I cared to invite to call on our return to town."

"He used to say terribly disagreeable things about you."

"They were nothing to the things he used to say about you. I hope, though, that this won't make us friends to any less degree."

"By no means. I wouldn't have him now if he were free."

"Nor I. And yet it would be foolish for us to give him up. He was lots of fun."

"True. How handsome he used to look when he gazed down into my eyes, and vowed that I was the only woman in the whole wide world he had ever loved."

"Yes, he was handsome when he did that. Pauline, we must punish him."

"But how can we?"

"I'll manage that. You don't suppose I have managed mamma and papa all my life for nothing, do you?"

"Well, how shall we do it?"

"We will both continue to be engaged to him, dear."

"Very well."

"We will inform each other when he is expected to call. On days when he has an engagement to call on you I'll send him a note asking him to call on me. He can't call on both, and of course he will have to tell fibs to one. When a man fibs to a girl he eases his conscience by sending her flowers or sweets. One of us will get the calls, and the other the sweets. When he has an engagement to call on me you will do the same thing. Pauline, I see visions of unlimited flowers and sweets. What do you think of it?"

"Why, I think you are the dearest, sweetest, most lovable girl in the world."

"Yes, I think I am; but I do hope he gets a good salary."

J. B.

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By Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Too Much Sewing.

So, "MARTHA," you are very fond of working a sewing machine, and do not mind if you spend the whole day at this harmless and useful pursuit. But your husband is not quite so fond of the music of the machine as, perhaps, he would be of Chopin or Mendelssohn, and when he finds you at work he grumbles forcibly. Do I think he is unreasonable? Well, "MARTHA," though fond of sewing myself, I must say I have a sneaking sympathy with your husband. I think it is just a little hard on a man who has perhaps been working hard all day, and wants a little relief from the sight of labour, to be saluted with the sewing machine's honest grind on returning home at night. A wife should be as much as possible at her husband's disposal in the few hours that he spends at home, and I should advise you to keep that sewing machine out of his sight, unless it is an absolute necessity.

❦❦❦

I know of a tragic wreckage in married life due to a similar persistency on the part of a wife in regard to washing. It was the case of an elderly sea captain of my acquaintance, who had just returned from a seven years' voyage. On entering his home, instead of being greeted with open arms, his wife said a few words and resumed some elaborate washing operations she had on hand. Captain B. sat in silence for a few minutes, then rose up and with a very strong exclamation, said "Good-bye, I'm off!" and he stamped out of the house and was never seen by his wife again. This is perfectly true, and though the captain may have been an exception, there are many men who have an equal loathing for domestic work if thrust under their eyes at the wrong moment.

❦❦❦

Time's Changes.

"W. M." has been keeping company with a girl for four years, their ages being respectively twenty-one and nineteen. All of a sudden she asked him to cease writing to her, and after that said she wished him to give her up, not, however, assigning any reason. He has since seen a good deal of her, but thinks her views have changed as regards his suit. Well, "W. M.," a girl's ideas often undergo a great change in four years, and you should not be very much surprised if there has been some modification in her early liking for you. I don't wish to discourage you, but her attitude may be explained by the fact that, while she is still fond of your friendship, she no longer thinks of you as a sweetheart. Ask her definitely to tell you the truth, and if it is as I surmise, face it like a man.

❦❦❦

I am always ready to sympathise with real disappointments and troubles in love. But for a young man of twenty-one, with his future to carve out for himself, to allow his thoughts to be distracted and his whole life confused out of a speculative wonder as to whether this or that girl loves, or merely likes him, or a dozen other small questions, is not to be encouraged. If she does not love you any longer, cease worrying about it, and spend you time trying to get on in the world.

❦❦❦

Are Presents Necessary?

Is courtship possible without presents? "LAWRENCE" is in love with a girl, but cannot afford to give her presents, and confesses that he is a very bad judge as to the kind of articles a girl would value. In the first instance, "LAWRENCE" would do better to give her no presents at all, than cheap ones which would be little valued by a girl. But if he should find it possible to occasionally give her a little token of his affection, he should try and give her something which he knows she is in need of. A lot of superfluous jewellery, and such like things, are not, by any means, the best appreciated presents.

❦❦❦

"LAWRENCE" should always make a little mental note when his beloved says she would very much like a certain thing—say a book, or ornament, or song. By quietly getting it for her, he will not only give her the impression of generosity, but of studious consideration for her tastes. A present now and again which supplies an actual want is really better and more valued than a host of costly things that may be precious but have no actual use. I know a young man who has not given his *fiancée* more than six presents during their engagement, but she will tell you that he is the most generous of men. Why? Because those six presents have always been the prompt sequel to some expressed wish on her part, and have been more highly valued than three times the number of undesired articles.

❦❦❦

The Superior Sister.

"T. K. L." met a girl lately who proved in every way an ideal companion for him. But lately he has met her sister. While the first girl has always treated him with the utmost amiability and charm, the sister has consistently ignored and snubbed him. Yet "T. K. L." says it is the sister that he feels he would really love, as one glance from her is more to him than anything the other could give him. Do I think he is unwise to foist his attention on a girl who snubs him, when he has the undivided regard of another who likes him?

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Perhaps "T. K. L." has misunderstood the whole attitude of the sister. It seems to me exceedingly likely that she has snubbed him not out of any dislike, but because she believes his attachment is for her sister. Such cases are very common, as few girls like to be suspected of even desiring to capture their sister's suitors. "T. K. L." should not equivocate. If it is the sister he cares for, he should not allow any complications to arise with the other girl. He should, however, first make sure that the one of his choice has not given her heart elsewhere, as then he would be a trespasser. If the course is clear then he is not, as he thinks, unwise in following up the suit. He can at least try and gain her attention for his sentiments towards her.

❦❦❦

The Eternal Cooking Question.

"WORRIED" is married, but fears his wife is a sad cook. Is there any hope of her improvement with years?

Cooks are made, not married. Sometimes, of course, they are married, and then they frequently cease to be cooks. But a girl doesn't become a cook merely because she has become a wife. It's a natural gift, and the result of cookery-book studies are, as a rule, fearsome. In nine cases out of ten it is something like this: You take three pounds of something, and add to it six ounces of chopped something else, with a sprig of this, and a sprinkling of that, and then douche it well with the other. Then you put it in a jar, covering it with an air-tight preserve envelope, and let it stand for two days. Then add half-a-pint of sherry and an eggcupful of unsweetened vinegar, a wreath of allspice, and a branch of cloves. Mix well, and boil for a week. Strain carefully through muslin, and, if you have any mercy on your friends, throw it all down the sink. The best way about cooking is not to bother. Take what you can get and don't grumble. If your wife can't cook, it won't improve matters to season the failure with ill-temper. Swallow your disappointment with your dinner, and when you must have a change take the little woman out to a really good restaurant. Save her from herself while you are about it.

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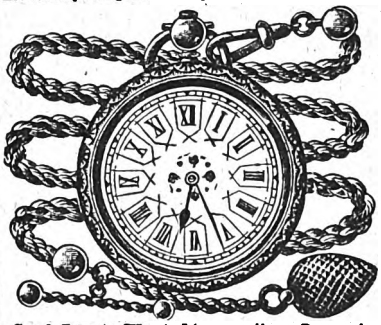

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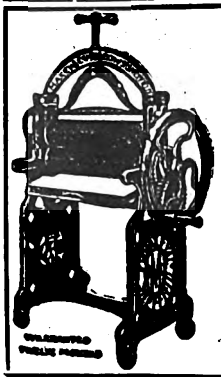

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LOVE OR DUTY?

A Story of Coronation Day.

Everybody declared that Netta Dunstan was the prettiest girl in the village of Matterly, and, for once in a way, everybody was right. Netta was so exceedingly pretty that even when she went, on market days, into the nearest country town, many heads were turned to watch her walk down the High Street, and it was, perhaps, small wonder that the girl was not free from vanity.

It was useless for her mother to grumble because Netta did far less work in the small farmhouse than did either of her sisters; Netta merely tossed her head when her mother remonstrated with her, and said in plain and forcible English that she had no intention of slaving as a sort of farm hand, but had loftier ambitions and higher hopes. Mrs. Dunstan sighed and talked to the girl without effect. Mr. Dunstan scolded, also ineffectually, but then he found his pretty daughter well-nigh irresistible when she smiled bewitchingly into his face and pouted her rosy lips at him.

Joe—Netta's elder brother, destined for the Metropolitan Police Force, and as steady and reliable a person as Netta was the reverse—had more influence over the wilful girl than the rest of the family, but even Joe was only too easily twisted round those small, useless fingers of hers, which had a way of twining themselves round his neck in most ingratiating fashion when his sister particularly wanted her own way.

Yes! Netta certainly was very pretty, and very fascinating, and, gazing at the forget-me-not blue of her eyes, the briar-rose tints of her complexion, and the soft, fair masses of her hair, you were inclined to overlook the weakness of mouth and chin, which betokened a corresponding weakness of character.

The girl's home lay on a breezy hillside, in one of the loveliest of English counties—an old-fashioned farmhouse, set back in a delicious garden, where, in June the tall white lilies mingled their fragrance with the roses that rioted over the house, and along the fence.

A happy home, scores of friends, more than her share of admirers, no girl had less reason than Netta to be restless and discontented. And yet her eyes were full of a longing for she knew not what; discontent was actually making little fretful lines about her mouth by the time she was eighteen!

"Netta is never satisfied. Nothing ever seems to please Netta." These remarks were frequently made by members of her family, and the girl's retort was always the same.

"Satisfied? No, I should think I wasn't satisfied to waste my life and eat my heart out in this deadly dull place, when there's a world worth living in outside. I never *shall* be satisfied here!" The last sentence was spoken with vehemence to her brother Joe, on a summer evening during his first holiday from London.

"Whatever is it you want to do?" he asked. "There's many girls would be thankful to have a home like yours, and plenty to eat, and that!"

"*Plenty to eat!*" Netta interrupted him scornfully. "Do you think girls are always thinking of their stomachs, same as men are? Why, I am sick of being well off. Let me have a chance of getting on, and doing things, and I'd cheerfully starve!"

Joe looked at her in silence for a moment. Life in the great metropolis had taught the silent, country-bred man many strange lessons. It gave him what he called a "queer turn in his inside," to hear his sister talking in this reckless way—he laid a hand gently on her arm.

"Don't talk like that, Netta," he said, "thank God you don't know what starving means, else you'd never speak lightly of it. I've seen a goodish bit of misery and wretchedness since I've been in London, and I can't bear to hear you talk as if,—as if——"

"There, you old silly!" Netta broke in again, "*I'm* not likely to starve, or anything of that sort. Why, I've been told that, with my face, I could get on well in London."

"Get on well in London? What do you mean?" Joe's voice was as stern as his gentle nature would allow of its being, and he looked into his little sister's flower-like face that was upraised to his, recoiling with a sick horror at the thought of her plunging into the whirlpool of London life.

"What do I mean?" she repeated, tossing her head. "Why, I mean that a very nice gentleman, staying with the Chambers last week, told me that I ought to do well on the stage. Those were his very words—'You ought to do well on the stage,' he said, and so I shall, you'll see."

"I don't want to see anything of the sort," Joe gripped his sister's hand. "You wouldn't surely think of such a thing, would you, dear? It would break father's and mother's hearts if you were to go away. And there's a lot of hardships and temptations and difficulties on the stage that you know nothing about. Why don't you buckle to, and make up your mind to settle down here and be as happy as the others are?"

She laughed a shrill little laugh that hurt her brother.

"Well, as you seem so against my plans I just shan't confide them to you," she said mischievously. "When I do go away I shan't tell you anything about it—don't you be afraid!" and no persuasions or coaxings of Joe's would make her say anything different.

All the obstinacy that makes a weak character belonged to

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Netta, and flattered by a passing compliment, forgotten as soon as uttered by the man who made it, she began not only to build castles in the air but to form practical plans for escaping from the life she detested into what she was sure would be fuller, more interesting, and blissfully free.

That brilliant successes awaited her she was convinced; the world had only to see her, and it would instantly be at her feet, so ran the vain musings of the foolish girl, with this result—that one morning Mary Dunstan (Netta's elder sister) came into the kitchen with a white face and shaking voice, saying:

"Mother, Netta has never been to bed all night. Her room is empty, her bed has not been slept in, and we cannot find her anywhere. Here is a note from her for you."

The note was very short:

"Dear Mother," it ran, "I am going away to make my fortune as others have done before me. I shall not come back until I have done it.—Your loving daughter,

"Netta."

The blow fell like a thunderbolt upon the peaceful homestead. Where could Netta have gone? What was she going to do? Why, ah, why had she left those who loved her in this selfish, reckless way?

These were the questions asked by Netta's father and mother, and by her sisters, but, alas, no answer came to their questionings, only the sickness of hope deferred, and of suspense that never ended in certainty. Everything that their simple wits could devise was done to discover the whereabouts of the missing girl. The kind old rector of Matterly prosecuted the most searching inquiries in every direction, but all in vain. Netta had vanished—vanished as completely as though the earth had swallowed her up and although the days after her departure slipped into weeks, and the weeks into months and years, no tidings of her reached her sorrowing family; the place where she had been all her life knew her no more.

* * * * *

It was Coronation Day!

The day for which the Empire had waited with growing expectation broke at last, and long before the first grey light of dawn crept over the housetops, London awoke, and knots of people had begun to assemble along the route to the Abbey. Ere the sun was up, the small isolated knots had swollen into closely packed crowds, prepared to stand patiently through the long hours yet to pass, before the coming of the King and Queen.

The crowd was good-tempered and cheery enough, as an English crowd always is. To vary the monotonous time of waiting, patriotic songs were lustily sung, harmless chaff was levied at those who were struggling to houses and stands, cheers were given for the bodies of soldiers who clattered by on horse and foot, and who, as the moments slipped by, began to take up their positions in front of the thronging multitudes.

The scene was one of brilliance and beauty never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. In the background the grey pile of Westminster stood out against the clear blueness of the June sky, the building walled in, as it were, by a solid mass of gaily-dressed folk upon the stands. Below them stood that wonderfully patient crowd, motley of colour, keen of face, cheery of aspect, and between the crowd and the wide roadway came the lines of soldiers, vivid splashes of colour so far as eye could see.

Amongst the hundreds of police on duty for the occasion on that eventful day, Joe Dunstan was numbered, and a proud and happy man he was when he took up his position at the back of the crowd, close to the place where a small street debouched into the main thoroughfare, and into which the rapidly swelling multitude already began to encroach.

If Joe's face was less rosy, and his air less countrified than in the old days at Matterly, he made up for it by his added breadth of chest and well set-up appearance, and there was a certain steadfastness in his eyes and a cheery self-reliance in his bearing that made him very good to look upon, and convinced an onlooker that he must be a most trustworthy individual—which, indeed, he was.

He whistled softly to himself as he regulated the vagaries of the crowd, and though his eyes were ever on the alert, his smile made those about him feel that even if he were regulating their behaviour, he did it so good-naturedly that all the sting of unpleasantness was taken out of the restrictions he imposed.

The hours dragged on, the crowd thickened, and the moment for which an Empire waited breathlessly came at last.

From far away a faint sound of cheering was borne upon the air, and the sound swelled into a roar that made men think of the Atlantic surges beating upon a rocky shore. The sun flashed upon the waving plumes of the Horse Guards, and shone back from their gleaming helmets like the passing of a breeze over a field of wheat, the great multitude of men and women behind the soldiers swayed forward.

Joe Dunstan choked with the rest, an unaccustomed dimness for which he could not account clouded his clear eyes, emotions inexplicable to his simple soul swept over him, and his face flashed round as the other faces flashed, to see the King pass by!

Then, all in a moment, he was recalled to a sense of his duties, and of the every day, for, just in front of him, on the rim of the swaying crowd, he saw a girl, evidently unimpressed by the greatness of the occasion, slip a hand into the pocket of an old gentleman, who was far too much absorbed in waving his hat in the air to take heed whether his pocket was picked or no.

But Joe, on the alert once more, saw the incident perfectly, and took two rapid steps in the direction of the girl and her victim. Her back was turned to Joe, and a swift pang of compunction shot through his kindly heart as he saw her stooping figure, her miserable rags, her air of want and misery.

"Poor creature," he thought sadly, "just got to the fag end of everything, I daresay; driven to this, maybe, by hunger and wretchedness."

Joe's life in London had had no hardening effect upon him, very much the reverse. He was more than ever pitiful towards all sorrow and sin, and especially so towards sinning and suffering womanhood.

Loving memories of the pretty little sister he had loved and lost, made all women sacred in his eyes, and it was with something very like regret that he elbowed his way through the people round him, and laid a heavy but gentle hand on the shoulder of the girl he had been watching.

With a startled cry she turned, and looked up into his face, writhing under his grasp, her own face full of fear and dismay.

"I'm not doing anything; I swear I'm not doing any harm; I—don't——"

The words died on her lips; her face grew pale as death; her wide, terrified eyes were fixed upon her captor with an awful fear in their depths, and but for Joe's arm she would have tottered and fallen.

"My God! My little sister!"

His own healthy, bronzed face blanched; he felt as though he were wrapped in the folds of some hideous nightmare from

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which there was no escape; the historic scene about him—the shouting multitudes, the glory and the pageant faded from his eyes, and he only saw—Netta's face!

Netta's face it was—but changed, degraded, altered almost out of all recognition. Almost, not quite, for her brother knew her!

In spite of the ravages wrought by time and trouble, her brother knew her still.

Her blue eyes were faded and dim; the hair, of which she had been so proud, hung in limp disorder about her pale and miserable face. Lines of sin and want were carved about her mouth, and the cheeks that had been fresh and lovely as a briar rose were white and sunken now. She wore a miscellaneous collection of rags, fastened at haphazard, and a battered hat was on her head. She presented an appearance of such forlorn misery that a wild hope ran through Joe's mind that the old gentleman whose pocket she had picked might forbear from giving her in charge.

"Surely," the kind policeman thought, "no one would wish to punish a girl so wretched—and on Coronation Day, too!"

But the old gentleman was not possessed of so kindly a heart as was Joe. He wormed himself out of the crowd, and came to where Joe and his captive stood, indignation gleaming in his small steely eyes, and glowing in every feature of his speaking countenance.

"I give that young woman in charge, constable," he stuttered fiercely; "disgraceful that on a day like this, when his gracious Majesty——"

Anger did not allow him to finish his sentence, and before he could speak again, Netta had flung herself free of Joe's restraining arm hand, and grasped the arm of the angry old gentleman.

"Oh, sir, forgive me!" she cried passionately, "forgive me, forgive me. It was the first time, and I am starving. I have tried to be honest, indeed, indeed, I have, but I am starving, forgive me!"

"Tut, tut," the old gentleman exclaimed, shaking himself free of her hand; "take the young woman away, constable. First time, indeed! Take her away. If she is starving, no doubt they will give her food at the station, and feed her well in prison. I give her in charge, and here is my card."

Thrusting his card into Joe's reluctant hand, the old man turned away, to resume a place amongst the sightseers, and Joe and his sitser were left side by side.

He had laid a gentle hand on her shoulder again, and now drew her away from the crowd of staring eyes, saying—

"You must come along now."

He spoke firmly, almost sternly, whilst the many-eared multitude still swayed about them, but when they reached a quiet corner in a deserted street, he stopped and spoke very softly.

"Netta," he said, brokenly, "I can't believe it—even now I can't believe it."

"Oh, it's all right!" she answered recklessly. "I did it all right. I meant to rob the silly old thing. I tell you, as I told him, I'm hungry, hungry, hungry. I don't suppose you know what that means, but I do, and it hurts. Well! I don't care. They'll feed me in prison anyhow, won't they? The old beast said they'd feed me there, so just take me along quick, it's all right"—and she broke into a shrill peal of mirthless laughter, that made Joe's heart ache to breaking point.

"Queer, isn't it?" she went on, after a minute, with again that hard reckless laugh, "a brother taking a sister in charge! That doesn't often happen, I'll be bound. My goodness, it's a sort of a record case, isn't it?"

"*Don't* talk and laugh like that, dear," he said. "I can't bear to hear you."

She checked the wild laughter that still rose to her lips, and looked up into his kindly face with hard miserable eyes.

"You have always been such a good chap," she said at last. "And I—I was always bad." A little sob caught her throat, her laughter died utterly away. Looking into Joe's clear, loving eyes, some of the bitter misery about her heart melted for the first time in many and many a long day—and a longing to cry, which she had not experienced for years, swept over her.

"You're just the same, Joe," she said, after a pause, in a shaking voice. "London hasn't taught you all the awful things it has taught me."

A great bitterness rang through her voice; Joe looked at her pitifully.

"Poor little girl," he said tenderly, "poor little girl."

The gentle voice, the tender words, opened the flood gates of Netta's hardened heart. Something in his words brought back to her old memories out of the long ago, stirring within her a thought of the old home on the hillside, and of days when her elder brother had guided her toddling, childish steps with strong and tender hand, picking her up when she fell, and soothing her fears with those same loving words, "Poor little girl, poor little girl."

Dropping her face into her hands she broke into a passion of sobs, crying out as the tears rained through her fingers—

"I've never been sorry before, not in all these years, I've never been sorry. It's your face and your eyes, and your kind voice make me sorry now. I wish I'd been a better girl, Joe—I wish——"

"You'll have to begin again, won't you, dear?" he said kindly and awkwardly; "there's always a chance to begin again."

"Begin again?" she echoed drearily. "After prison and disgrace, shall I get a chance to begin well? Better be dead than disgraced. I wish I was dead—oh! I wish I was dead."

Her voice grew fierce and reckless again, and Joe's eyes grew dim. A great conflict raged within his soul—the conflict between love and duty.

To give his little sister in charge was as hard—nay, harder, than to plunge a knife into his own heart; yet to neglect his duty seemed terrible to the man whose faithfulness and loyalty had made him a by-word in the force.

His little sister! His pretty little sister, whom he loved. How could he hand her over to justice? What irony of fate was it that had thrust this hateful task upon him? Instinctively he realised that disgrace would infallibly be the final step in Netta's downward path. She would emerge from prison a worse and more hardened woman than she entered it. Nothing in all her reckless life would have so bad an effect upon her as to suffer the penalty of the law.

But on the other hand, if he failed in his duty, if he did not give her in charge, so flagrant and glaring a dereliction would merit the severest censure and punishment, and Joe's conception of his duty was of a very high order. To do it faithfully was his chief ambition, to fail in it would seem to him an eternal disgrace.

And yet—his little sister! His little sister!

"How did it all happen?" he asked her suddenly and abruptly. "How did you come to *this?*" His eyes glanced at her ragged garments, her dishevelled appearance.

A great shame made her hang her head, and brought a flood of crimson to her white face.

"I sank by degrees," she whispered. "I ran away from home, thinking I should make a name and a fortune. I was sure I must get on. I wouldn't tell you or anyone where I went. I've been through——," she cried passionately. "Ah! Joe! tell all silly girls like me to stop safe at home, and leave this great, ugly, wicked world alone. I got on the stage, and I went into the provinces, and the work and the travelling and hardships nearly killed me. Then I lost my looks, and nobody wanted me without them. When I wasn't pretty any more I could get no work, and so I drifted—down, down, down—into the depths. I know the lowest of them! I've

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eaten the bread that had been thrown away into the gutters! I've hunted the dustbins in the early morning to find scraps of food." Joe uttered a low exclamation of horror, but she went on drearily, "I've slept under archways and on doorsteps. I know all the worst that life has got to give, but I never stole until to-day. I couldn't bring myself to do it. I never stole till to-day, and I was so hungry. Joe—can't you save me now?"

The words rang in his ears and pulled at his heart strings.

"Can't you save me now?"

The conflict between love and duty raged yet more wildly in his soul.

"I give her in charge."

"Can't you save me now?"

The two sentences danced before his eyes in letters of fire, until he felt as though he no longer knew right from wrong.

All at once the quiet of the peaceful street in which they stood was ruthlessly disturbed. A great surging crowd, driven from some other vantage ground, and trying to find an outlet somewhere, swept down upon them.

As the multitude rolled down the little street like some relentless flood, a sudden flash of illumination came to Joe, and all in a second he made his choice, whether for good or evil he felt he should never be able to decide.

Stooping over Netta, he whispered in her ear——

"When the crowd come round us, I shall take my hand off your shoulder. Then go. And—and, Netta, dear—go home—with this."

He pressed a coin into her hand, then he drew a long breath, whether of relief or pain he would have found it hard to say himself, and the next moment the crowd closed round them!

His hand slipped from the girl's shoulder; he turned away from her, and elbowed his way through the people, who were too intent on pushing into a main thoroughfare to pay any attention to Joe's white face and strained, fixed glance, whilst he was intent only on appearing to be busy in stemming the torrent of humanity that streamed past him.

His heart beat in heavy thuds that were almost painful; his hand was clenched so tightly that the nails actually dug themselves into the flesh; his eyes saw only Netta's changed, worn face, his ears heard only her pleading cry.

"Can't you save me now?" and though his brain throbbed, the aching thought that for the first time in his years of faithful service he had failed to do his duty!

* * * * * *

On the next morning, when Joe Dunstan with a heavy heart was preparing for his day's work, a telegram was put into his hands. He tore it open hurriedly, and read these words——

"I have come home. God bless you.—Netta."

A sob rose in his throat and nearly choked him; there was a mist before his eyes, but his soul sung with gladness too great for words.

"Thank God!" he thought, "thank God! I believe I acted rightly; I cannot say for certain, but I believe I acted rightly. 'Twas a hard fight between love and duty, and—love won!"

L. G. Moberly.

A CHANGED DECISION.

Riches Pave the Way of the Course which Seldom Runs Smooth.

Walston Crone was a Member of Parliament, and a very wealthy man. Although he had once been poor himself, since he had acquired riches he felt contempt for poor people, and thought them little better than the worms of the earth.

At the moment we introduce him to the reader he was walking from one end of his study to the other, to the creaking accompaniment of his own boots, while in peremptory tones he dictated letters to his secretary, a young man with a handsome, high-bred face and a serene repose of expression.

"If you have finished that, write this!" said Walston Crone, curtly, and in jerky fashion he dictated the following letter:

"Dear Lowden,—As my present secretary will be leaving me within a week, you will do me a favour by recommending someone to take his place. I want a gentleman who will not abuse my confidence. I do not want a presumptuous puppy. Yours truly,"

Not a muscle of the young man's face moved; he wrote the letter, added it to those already awaiting his employer's signature, and spread a fresh sheet of paper on the desk before him with an imperturbable calm that irritated the great man. His grey eyes sparkled, his thin lips became a mere line, and he galloped full speed along the road of wrath.

"Have you anything to say, Marsden? If so, remember that time, and not eternity, is at your disposal!"

"I have only to say that you might have found a less ingenious way of letting me know that my services are to be dispensed with immediately."

"I am not aware of any reason why you should receive special consideration. I have found you to be a presumptuous puppy, and I treat you as one! Your conduct has obliged me to send my daughter away from home, or, I should rather say, from your impertinent scheming! You—you unmitigated upstart!"

"Suppose we discuss the matter like gentlemen, Mr. Crone? I love your daughter with all my heart, and I am proud to say that she loves me. You have nothing against me but my want of money, and until lately you appeared willing to overlook that. Certainly, some time must elapse before I can be in a position to offer Natalie a fitting home."

"Any fool knows that!" said Mr. Crone.

"I am glad you agree with me so far," returned Marsden, suavely. "She is quite willing to wait. Will you forgive me if I say that you have treated me rather unfairly? How? Well, by tacitly approving my suit until a richer man appeared."

Walston Crone was speechless, and made a singularly undignified exit.

In certain circumstances there is nothing in the world so aggravating as the simple truth.

* * * * * * *

"Natalie, who is that impudent young man who has begun to haunt our daily drives?"

Readers should turn at once to page 806, and read "Confessions of Cynthia," the splendid new series of stories revealing the secrets of high life.

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"Do you imply that I am acquainted with impudent young men, Mrs. Hungerford?" inquired Natalie.

"My dear, that is an evasion. It may be as well to tell me all about it—or him. For I am certain there is something behind your father's request that I look after you for a time. I am sure he did not deprive himself of your charming company simply to confer it on me," said the middle-aged lady, with a significant nod and a kindly glance from her still fine eyes.

She was a good-natured, wealthy woman, with little or nothing to do with her time and money, and with a more or less praiseworthy desire to make her own life and her own surroundings as pleasant as possible.

Walston Crone had made her acquaintance in London only a year ago, and, having a high opinion of her shrewdness, had placed his only daughter in her hands, feeling certain that she would soon cure the girl of her silly romance, and inspire her with a fitting esteem of the pomps and vanities which money alone can provide.

Natalie looked at her chaperon thoughtfully for several moments.

"That young man, who is by no means impudent, was my father's secretary."

"And is——"

"My intended husband. I have promised to wait for him until his position justifies our being married. It may interest you to hear something of his personal history. His mother married in opposition to the wishes of her family—ran away, as probably I shall have to do, with a poor man. She was left a widow with a family very inadequately provided for. She did not long survive her husband, so the burden of responsibility fell on Gerard's shoulders. Do you understand? He has been fighting life's battles for his younger brothers and sisters."

"Your father would say that there is a great moral lesson in that story, my dear—a solemn warning against improvident matches. If your Gerard's mother had married prudently, her children would have inherited riches, and he would have been spared years of uncongenial work and sordid anxiety."

"I shall be proud to share his lot, whether high or humble. I am not posing as a revolted daughter, Mrs. Hungerford. The fact of the matter is that at first father actually smiled upon us, and only changed his aspect when a horrid old man who has made a fortune in pickles had the audacity to admire me. Of course, I was sent here out of Gerard's way, and now father has dismissed him."

"Ah!" exclaimed the elder lady, rather dryly. "By the way, what is his name?"

"Gerard Marsden."

"Gerard Marsden, did you say? The name seems somewhat familiar to me—to be connected with my younger days. I wonder what his mother's name was before she married. Do you know, Natalie?"

"Yes—it was Seyton—Lillian Seyton."

Mrs. Hungerford closed her eyes and laid her head slowly back on the cushions of the carriage. Her years, her experience, her lassitude, her worldliness, fell away from her.

Then she sat upright, and glanced at the ardent young face beside her with a new expression of her own.

"Your father is coming to Bournemouth next week," she said; "before that time I wish you to ask Mr. Gerard Marsden to come and see me—me, remember, not you!"

* * * * * * *

Mr. Crone arrived at Bournemouth in high good humour.

Never had he more keenly appreciated the luxury of Mrs. Hungerford's palatial mansion; never had its costly appointments, its air of ease and unlimited prosperity, filled him with a livelier sense of satisfaction.

Mrs. Hungerford received him graciously.

"Natalie is spending a week with the Kissams, and is as happy as a queen!" she said.

"Thanks to your kindness and your good sense!"

"Well—no, not altogether!" The lady gazed thoughtfully into space. "We are friends, Mr. Crone, are we not?" she murmured softly. "You think well of me, don't you?"

Was she about to propose? He had heard of widows availing themselves of the leap year privilege out of season.

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Hungerford, 'think well' very, very inadequately expresses the more than respect and admiration I entertain for you."

"And yet, Mr. Crone, you did not scruple to turn my nephew out of your house at a moment's notice!"

"Why, Mrs. Hungerford, you astound me! I do not even know your nephew!"

"My good man, you know Gerard Marsden!" exclaimed the lady, revelling in the situation.

"Don't call me a good man!" cried the M.P., with natural resentment.

Mrs. Hungerford, good-humouredly, but with a touch of sarcasm, apologised for her mistake.

"Gerard Marsden entered my employ and my home on false pretences," continued Mr. Crone. "He has deceived me as to his position. He led me to suppose that he was without influential relatives. He has been in receipt of a handsome salary which he did not need, thereby depriving another——"

"Before you complete your summing up, Mr. Crone, allow me to say that it is only within the last few days that he and I have known of each other's existence. Gerard's mother was my sister—the beauty and pet of the family; she married against father's will and without his consent, and he disowned her. He prohibited all communication with her, and she was practically dead to us. I married Mr. Hungerford, and my long residence in Scotland prevented me from endeavouring to find my sister when I felt myself no longer bound by paternal prohibition. I am childless, as you know. Gerard Marsden is my heir. It is my intention to settle an adequate income on him at once. Now, Mr. Crone, will you still forbid the banns?"

The M.P. rose to the occasion nobly.

"Mrs. Hungerford," he said, "the mere fact of Gerard Marsden being your nephew removes every objection to his marriage with Natalie. May they be happy!"

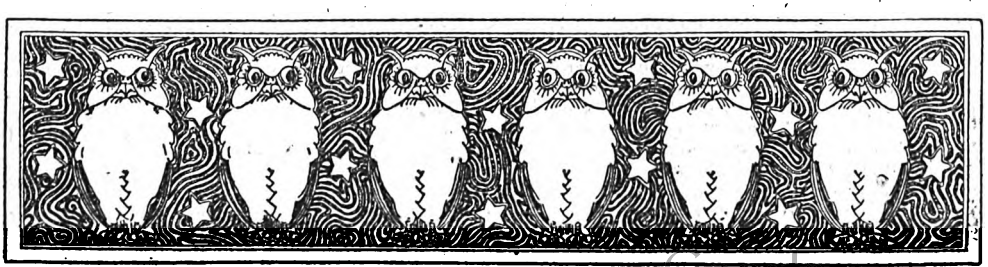
Mrs. Hungerford concealed a smile with one plump, jewelled hand; Walston Crone possessed himself of the other.

"So fair, so generous!" he said. "You have given them joy—will not you be kind to me as well? You have made the deepest impression on my heart. Be my wife—my adored, idolised wife!"

Mrs. Hungerford slightly shuddered as she drew herself away.

"Mr. Crone, I have experienced one loveless marriage, and that experience suffices!"

M. Chalmers.



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THE CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

Revelations in High Life by a Lady's Companion.

The writer of this series of true stories acted for many years in the capacity of lady's companion to a Society adventuress who lived by robbing her unsuspecting guests. Names have, for obvious reasons, been altered, but the facts are correct.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Mrs. NORTON	An adventuress who makes her money by robbing her friends.
CYNTHIA	Her cousin and companion who, when the events related below took place, was quite unsuspicious of Mrs. Norton's guilt.
FLUFFY	An accomplice of Mrs. Norton's.
LORD KINROSS	One of Mrs. Norton's most devoted admirers.
SIR JOHN STRICKLAND	A poor baronet who is deeply in love with Mrs. Norton.
MARY VERNON . . .	At one time engaged to be married to Lord Kinross.
HIRAM PETTIGREW .	An American millionaire.
PERCIVAL HOPE . . .	Pettigrew's secretary.

Mrs. Norton: Adventuress.

Cynthia: Her companion.

"HE SUSPECTS; MAKE HASTE."

FOR THE BENEFIT OF NEW READERS.

CYNTHIA tells in the opening chapter of her arrival at her cousin's in the capacity of companion, and of her discovery that Mrs. Norton is taking part in midnight card games, at which large sums of money are being lost and won. The climax is reached one night when Mary Vernon stakes her diamond ear-rings (a gift from Lord Kinross) and one of the onlookers finds them to be paste. Mary Vernon declares that they are exactly as given to her by Lord Kinross, whereupon Kinross breaks off the engagement. The diamonds subsequently appear as a gift from Fluffy to Mrs. Norton, set in a pair of hat-pins. A few weeks later the notorious Mrs. Norton, with Fluffy's help, succeeds in stealing a pocket-book, containing about eight thousand pounds in paper money, from Hiram Pettigrew at the Café Regal, by substituting for the millionaire's pocket-book one exactly like it. Later on Cynthia discovers the original pocket-book, empty of course, in one of her boxes.

FOR some minutes I did not touch the pocket-book, but let it lie where it had fallen on my lap. I stared half fascinated at the green and silver thing, too stupefied at finding it in my box to wonder how it came there. Not until I had opened the book, and the initials "H. P." in the millionaire's favourite scrawl, stared at me from inside the flap, did I awake.

Then in a panic I crept on tiptoe to the door and locked it; no one must come into my room while *that* was lying there. Fitfully I walked to and fro, half crying in my terror. All the tales I had heard of innocent girls accused and convicted of theft came back to me. I saw myself on trial, found guilty, and sent to prison. Useless to protest my innocence, the thing was *there*.

Suddenly, in the midst of my distress, there flashed across my mind the fact that Hiram Pettigrew had lost not his pocket-book but its contents.

To whom then did this book that I had found belong?

I picked it up carefully and took out the contents—some telegraph forms, an old envelope or two, and a press cutting. The articles were identical with those found in the pocket-book from which the notes had been extracted?

Yes; but had they been extracted.

Like a flash the solution of the problem came to me. The millionaire's pocket-book had been taken bodily, and another—similar in appearance and filled with papers such as he was wont to carry—substituted.

So far my reasoning seemed complete, but I had yet to trace the book from the Café Regal to my box at the Cecil. Strange that the thief had not destroyed the proof of his guilt. And yet was it a proof? If so, I should be held guilty, for the thief had transferred the book to me.

Who had done this cruel thing? I recollected the evening of the theft; the supper at the Café, Fluffy's illness, the disappearance of the pocket-book, our search, and my delight in finding it.

But I had found it—where? Between my chair and Percival Hope's. Close on the thought came the recollection of the strange look Frances had given the secretary, when Pettigrew declared—"someone" had stolen his property. Could it be—I glanced round fearfully—was it possible Percival Hope was the thief?

The thought was terrible; it hurt like a physical pain. It was not credible that he could act so meanly. The best of men might yield to a great temptation and commit theft, but only a low and base nature would seek to shift their guilt on to the shoulders of a friendless girl. No, no, it was not Percival.

I felt relieved when I had so decided, and tried to look at

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the matter more quietly, but all my fears came back at the sound of Frances' voice outside my door.

"Cynthia, I'm going out—I want to speak to you. Make haste, child! Why on earth do you lock your door?"

Muttering something about a headache I threw the pocket-book under the bed, and trembling, turned the key.

Frances glanced at me sharply, taking note of my white face and scared appearance generally.

"I'm going house-hunting with Sir John," she said; "tell Fluffy I shan't be back in time to see him to-day, so he'd better come in early to-morrow."

"Yes," I answered, with a catch in my throat. Then, as I met her look, half-questioning, half scornful, I felt the hot blood rush into my cheeks and the tears filled my eyes.

"Frankie!" I cried in desperation, "I want to speak to you. I—I——" here I broke down and sobbed, leaning my head against the door-post.

"You're hysterical," said Frances calmly. "Go and lie down, and I'll send Ella to you with a cup of tea, or perhaps some brandy would be better. I'm sorry I can't stay, but I'm late already, and Sir John will be impatient. Try and compose yourself, there's a good child," and with a pat on my shoulder, Frances departed, leaving me to cry in peace.

Her indifference hurt me cruelly, and yet I was conscious of a sense of relief that she had not given me an opportunity of telling her about the pocket-book. I did not fear her judgment for myself, but I dreaded that she might form the same suspicion that for an instant had glanced through my mind.

At any rate I had a few hours respite; Frances would not be back till late.

Fluffy found me sitting disconsolate by the window; I felt wretched and looked worse. I expected him to go when he heard that Frances was out, but the aggravating man elected to remain for tea.

"You're looking ill, Miss Cynthia," he said, staring hard, "what is the matter?"

Fluffy spoke kindly. For the first time I noticed that he had a pleasant voice. For the first time also it struck me that there was more in his face than I had thought. His eyes, when by chance he opened them wide enough for you to see, were unexpectedly humorous; he had a firm chin, and his mouth was well shaped. Stout of figure and not tall, he was never awkward, and at times bore himself with a touch of dignity.

And yet he answered to the name of "Fluffy!"

"Something's troubling you," he said, bringing his chair close to mine. "What is it?"

I was so miserable that I felt drawn towards him. True, Frances had forbidden me to discuss her affairs with anyone, but then Hiram Pettigrew's pocket-book scarcely could be called *her* affair.

"You have known my cousin a long time, Mr. Thomson?"

Fluffy gave a little start. I suppose "Thomson" sounded unfamiliar.

"Yes," he said slowly—"a long time. I knew the late Mr. Norton very well. We were intimate friends. Since her husband's death, I have had the privilege of advising Mrs. Norton on various matters. I am sure"—he leant forward and smiled encouragingly—"your cousin would be quite pleased for me to advise you also, should you require advice."

"I? Oh, Mr. Thomson, I am *so* unhappy, I don't know what to do."

"Tell me what is worrying you. That is the first step."

"But, but—you won't tell Frances, will you?" I cried, hysterically. "There's nothing wrong, indeed, but she might suspect, she might——"

Fluffy laid his hand on my arm.

"Hush!" he said quietly, "we won't discuss your cousin. Let me hear what has happened to upset you."

His words calmed, and also silenced me.

"Well," he said patiently, after a long wait. "Well?"

In desperation I replied. "Look!" I said, springing to my feet. "Look! I found this in my box an hour ago. *This!*" and I held out the pocket-book.

He did not take it, but stared from me to the book and back again at me.

"*In your box!*" he repeated, half whispering; "how did it get in your box?"

"Someone put it there," I cried, "to make people think I was the thief!"

He turned away with a quick indrawn breath. Twice he walked the length of the room, and then he spoke.

"And who," he said, "put it there?"

He stood before me, his head thrown back, with a new look upon his face—Fluffy's face—a look half indignation and half pity. The pity I felt, somehow, was for me, the indignation—

"Who?" he asked again, and stooped towards me. His eyes grown suddenly hard and bright, flashed into mine. They seemed to drag my secret from me, to read the horrible suspicion that would not be silenced.

"No, no!" I screamed, "it is not Percival—not Percival!"

He drew a long breath and was silent. I sat crouching in a chair hiding my face. After some minutes I found courage to speak.

"You won't say anything," I whispered. "I mean you don't think——"

Fluffy came quite close to me. He looked surprised, and yet I thought pleased.

"I think, my dear Miss Cynthia," he said, "that you have acted with marvellous discretion. You have not mentioned this," he rapped the pocket-book, "to anyone but me?"

"No one but you." I looked the question that I dare not ask.

"I hardly think it would be right just now to worry Mrs. Norton with the matter," he replied. "She has a great deal of business to get through, and, as you know, she is not very strong. Nobody else is, of course, concerned to hear. I shall take upon myself to inform Mr. Pettigrew of your discovery, and," he smiled, "I think we may be content to let the matter rest in his hands. He will do what is best for all parties. Meantime——" he insinuated the book towards me.

"Will you not send it to Mr. Pettigrew?" I asked; "or, at any rate, take charge of it for the present. It would be a nightmare to me to have the thing for an hour."

"Certainly, if you wish," he answered.

"And——" I glanced up wistfully, striving to read his face.

"Don't worry," he said, kindly, "about anything or anybody. You can leave it all to Pettigrew. Only take my advice, and don't speak of it—to anyone."

"Thank you so much, so very much, Mr. Thompson; you have been awfully good to me."

"Not a bit," he answered. "I'm only glad to have been of use. Always come to me if you're worried, won't you?" He smiled pleasantly, gripped my hand, and departed, leaving me much comforted by the interview.

If only I had not let slip the name of Percival to him I should have felt comparatively happy.

It seemed as if I were to play the part of hostess all the afternoon. No sooner had Fluffy gone than Lord Kinross was announced, carrying a bunch of pale yellow roses.

"All by yourself?" he said cheerily, "and looking very tired. It's a bad sign when we grow weary of ourselves, Miss

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Hamilton. What has happened to your cousin?" and he looked quickly round the room.

"She's gone house-hunting with Sir John, and won't be back till late."

He laughed, glanced quickly from me to the flowers he was carrying, then dropped them into my lap.

"Gather ye roses while ye may—take them, Cynthia, if they're pretty enough."

"Did you bring them for me?" I asked suspiciously.

"Can you doubt it?" he murmured impressively. I did all the same, but the roses were lovely, and Lord Kinross almost as nice; so I put the flowers in water and gave his lordship tea.

"Heard anything of old Pettigrew and his pocket-book?" asked Kinross.

I felt myself turn crimson.

"Pettigrew's not long left England," I answered. "Frankie's expecting a letter as soon as he lands."

"What of the notes, anyhow?"

"His secretary in making inquiries, I believe. Lord Kinross, do you know Percival Hope?"

His lordship looked surprised.

"I do," he said, laconically.

"Do you like him?"

"No," he answered smiling, "I don't. But why these conundrums, Cynthia? Do you suspect Percival the Perfect of nicking the old man's notes?"

"Oh! Lord Kinross, How wicked you are!" I cried indignantly.

"Oh, Cynthia! How cross you look!" he answered. "I assure you I don't mean anything against Percival Hope. I don't like him, but I can bear testimony to his moral worth—that's the way to put it, 'moral worth';—it's a delightful phrase. Sounds like Percival himself. No, I'm not going to tell you anything else, how we met and why we parted. It's no good, Cynthia, I'm not to be pumped." He leant back and laughed until I felt that I could have boxed his ears with joy.

Lord Kinross had stayed an hour at least, and seemed inclined to lengthen out his call indefinitely when Frances unexpectedly returned. Lord Kinross was sitting on the hearthrug, "telling my fortune." He declared that he was an expert palmist, and that mine was a most interesting hand. Frankie did not seem quite pleased at his occupation, and I took an early opportunity of escaping from the room.

I learnt from Frankie later that she had secured a house in Pont Street. Mrs. Ponsonby, Sir John's sister, had agreed to let my cousin her family residence for the season—unfurnished.

"We shall move in pretty soon, Cynthia, directly the place is a bit ship-shape. It will have to be refurnished from garret to basement. Mrs. Ponsonby will warehouse her goods and chattels, and I shall have a free hand."

Frankie was very busy the next week choosing wall-papers, selecting carpets and curtains, thinking out colour schemes or designing her drawing-room furniture. Sir John was her faithful companion and adviser in these matters, and proved indefatigable.

Kinross rather resented Strickland's monopoly of my cousin, and turned up one afternoon with the suggestion that we should go to the Spring Meeting at Epsom next day.

"We'll go down on my motor-car," he said. "You haven't seen it yet, Mrs. Norton?"

"To tell the truth, I'm rather afraid of motor-cars, their chief characteristics seem to be a great noise and a horrid smell. I don't like either."

"Ah, that may be so with other people's motors, mine's quite different. As fast as a bird and as light. Say you'll come, Frankie, I'll help you make a book on the races if you consent?"

Frankie did not need much more pressing. She gave way to his lordship's pleading, and next morning found us both in Kinross's motor-car, flying along the road at a terrific speed.

My cousin wore a racing coat of biscuit-coloured cloth, with handsome silver buttons inlaid with gold and lined with a pale shade of rose silk. She looked very charming, and attracted notice from the men and criticism from the women.

It was a bright day and quite warm in the sunshine; there were a lot of people at the races, and the gay dresses of the women, the bright colours of the jockeys, above all the string of horses, high-bred, delicate-looking creatures, made a vivid picture of the course.

Most of the women seemed indifferent about the horses, they were so keen on their bets and their "books" they had no eyes for the pretty creatures. Frankie, on Kinross's advice, backed a favourite for a pony, and I, in a humbler fashion, followed her example, and won a dozen pairs of gloves! We had a champagne lunch, and enjoyed ourselves prodigiously. Kinross met a lot of men he knew, most of whom he introduced to Frankie. As the afternoon wore on she was surrounded by a small crowd of good-looking fellows, laughing joking, and complimenting her. Kinross, in the best of spirits, had gone to speak to a woman who had signalled to him from her carriage close by. She was a middle-aged matron of acid aspect, with lean features, by name Lady Westall.

"Where have *you* come from?" she asked Kinross in a high pitched voice. "Been talking to the Norton woman, I suppose. Can't understand what you men see in her. That reminds me," milady bent forward and spoke eagerly and in low tones. Gradually her excitement got the better of her caution, she was inveighing against somebody—presumably a woman—and in unmeasured terms. I caught a word or two here and there "gambles—other people's money—bad lot—have nothing to do with her." I felt sorry for the "bad lot," whoever she might be. Lady Westall's tongue seemed all too bitter. Kinross listened impatiently at first, but gradually grew interested, and questioned milady eagerly. He was with her some half hour.

Lord Kinross did not seem inclined to talk going home.

He was very quiet, almost dull, and refused Frankie's invitation to stay to dinner. We did not see him again before we left the "Cecil," he called once but we were out.

Frankie took his defection very quietly, and was more charming than ever to Sir John. She devoted herself to him, in fact, and even contrived to shake off Fluffy to a great extent.

Sir John did not like poor Fluffy, and was terribly stiff to him.

Percival Hope called before we left the Cecil. Frances as usual was out, and he waited but a short time. He was rather stiff, but looked very handsome, and I felt horribly ashamed that I could ever have suspected him. He had heard from Pettigrew, who inquired particularly after me. I was longing to ask if Hiram had mentioned anything about the pocket-book, but remembering Fluffy's advice, kept silent.

"You'll come and see my cousin at Pont Street?" I asked him.

"Thanks, I shall be sure to do so. And you—" he paused. "Are you staying long with Mrs. Norton, Miss Hamilton?"

"I hope so. I have no home, nor any relative except my cousin."

His face softened.

You can begin our powerful serial, "Out of Great Tribulation," to-day.

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"Poor child," he murmured. Then stopped, as though he wanted to say something else.

"You like the life?" he asked abruptly.

"Surely."

"I should have thought an engagement as governess to young children a——"

I interrupted him indignantly. "Thank you, the prospect does not allure me. Why should I prefer a dull, drab existence as an over-worked, under-paid, teacher to living with my cousin?"

"Because," he stopped abruptly. "Forgive me," he said. "I have no right to interfere."

But I felt ruffled, and determined as Frankie would have said, "to get my own back."

"Lord Kinross was talking about you the other day," I said mendaciously.

"Whatever Lord Kinross says is sure to be interesting," Percival returned.

"Do you like him?"

"At times."

"Why not say you detest him outright?"

"I have a preference for speaking the truth," was the answer.

"Always?" I glanced at him, the tail of the old suspicion peeping from my eye.

"Invariably. That is my excuse for saying something that you will not like. I want you to think over my suggestion of taking a position of governess in a nice family. Seriously, I think it would be better for you. Your life here is too exciting to be healthful. Amusement palls after a time."

"Whereas teaching and training is a joy for ever? Thanks for your interest, Mr. Hope, but I'm not so frivolous as you imagine."

"Don't misunderstand me, Miss Hamilton. I do not think you frivolous, I am only afraid that the joy of life you so happily possess may become tarnished. And"—he paused—"yours is too fair a life to be overshadowed," he said, "but it seems I can do nothing."

"Indeed, Frances is quite kind to me," I protested. "She is not often cross."

"I am glad." Then, moved by impulse, he took my hands in his. "Who would not be kind to you?" he murmured, and raised it to his lips.

I felt inclined to cry when he had gone. Why should he be so anxious for me to leave Frances? The old doubt crept into my heart; I could not help remembering that if I went away the risk of discovery so far as I was concerned, would be removed.

For the moment I regretted having made a confidant of Fluffy. It would have been better to have gone straight to Percival. And yet how could I have passed over my cousin in favour of a stranger? Should I write and tell him now of my discovery? Impossible. He would know I had at first suspected him. Whichever way I looked it seemed a hopeless tangle; a tangle that only Pettigrew could straighten.

We moved into Pont Street the end of February; Parliament had opened and the season was about to commence. Our house was at the Piccadilly end, close to the Park.

It was a bright afternoon when we arrived and our new home looked very charming in the sunshine. The window boxes of blue tiles were gay with yellow daffodils, filmy curtains softened the light within the rooms, and the blinds were a creamy satin.

The wide hall, furnished with quaint oak settles, was softly lit, and a faint scent of rose leaves came from huge satsuma jars.

There were three reception, and a dining room on the ground floor. The latter was furnished in green oak, chairs, sideboard and settee, and the carpet was a delicate shade of the same colour. The window curtains were a Gobelin blue. On the mantelpiece, curiously carved, were silver flagons; a big blue bowl full of mimosa stood on the sideboard. There were pictures on the wall, reproductions of Rossetti, and a signed sketch of Whistler's.

Sir John spent the first evening with us, and seemed very happy. His eyes never quitted Frances for a second, and his smile when she spoke to him was good to see. Frances herself was very sweet that evening, not only to the baronet but to me. Altogether we had a most enjoyable time, and I felt sorry when Sir John took his departure about ten.

A few minutes after Sir John left, a telegram arrived for Frankie. She tore open the envelope, read the wire, and, with an impatient movement, threw it on the table.

The light fell upon the paper. There was no signature and no address. Only these words: "He suspects. Make haste."

Whom did it mean? Was it possible the wire referred to Sir John? But, then, what had he to suspect, and why was Frankie to make haste?

"Any answer, ma'am?" asked the maid.

"Yes." Frankie hastily scribbled a few words on a piece of paper, and handed it to me.

"I shall be in all day to-morrow. Come and see me," said the message—to Sir John, I thought. I looked again and found it was addressed to Kinross!

[Next Tuesday's instalment tells how Mrs. Norton received a proposal of marriage.]

"Nothing but two strong hands to work for you, two arms to shelter you, a heart to love you always." *(The above incident comes into next week's instalment of "The Confessions of Cynthia.")*

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The Storming of the Fortress.

A Charming Little Narrative of a Girl's Two Conquests.

THERE are few people who can look unmoved at a bride on her wedding day. But Judge Richard Hazleton stood grimly by while his favourite grandson, Richard, was married to the girl of his choice, and nobody detected the least softening of his keen black eyes, or the slightest relaxation of the stern lines round his close-set mouth.

When congratulations became necessary, he marched slowly up to the young pair, standing flushed and smiling among the flowers, bowed stiffly to the new Mrs. Richard Hazleton, and looking coldly over her fair head, shook his grandson's hand without a word, and turned away, a proud, unrelenting figure. Then he vanished from the house, and nobody saw him again that day.

Richard Hazleton, his smooth cheek glowing an indignant red, looked down at his bride with a tender light in his eyes.

"Never mind, dear," he whispered; "you'll win him yet."

She smiled back, with the least suspicion of wet lashes to intensify the beauty of her violet eyes. The look said, "I will," and Richard believed it, and stood straight again, with a lift of the head singularly like that of Judge Hazleton himself.

For it mattered much what Grandfather Hazleton thought of Richard's marriage. The boy had lost both father and mother at an early age, and he and his brother Archer had been brought up by their paternal grandfather. Archer had finished his college course and gone away to the other side of the world several years before Richard had come to maturity. The younger brother had been Judge Hazleton's dearest treasure, whom he loved with a love as deep as it was reticent.

When, at twenty-six, Richard, on a successful footing of his own in the world, had announced to his grandfather his intention to marry the fair-haired girl with the eyes like blue violets, who had grown up in the big house next door, and whose father was Judge Hazleton's especial aversion, the old gentleman had been excessively displeased.

But he had not been able to advance a reason for his displeasure, beyond the insufficient one of his dislike to his neighbour and political rival, so the marriage had proceeded. For Richard, while loyal to his grandfather, was also loyal to the violet eyes, and knew no just cause why any should forbid the banns.

Judge Hazleton himself did not forbid them, but he did all that he felt called upon to do in the matter when he went to the house of General Andrews during the brief period of the marriage ceremony.

"Grandfather," said Richard, coming in one morning when he and Evelyn had returned from their wedding trip and had taken up a temporary abode next door, "we've decided on a house—if we can get it. Will you sell us one of yours?"

His tone was precisely as if nothing unusual had happened. The judge eyed him severely over his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Which one? The Singleton place, I suppose."

"No, sir. Aunt Martha's old house in Albemarle Street."

The judge took off his glasses and wiped them. "May I inquire why you have selected that?"

"It is within my means—I hope," exclaimed Richard promptly. "The Singleton place is not. We don't care to start off with a pretence of style beyond our income. Besides, Evelyn prefers the old house."

Judge Hazleton grunted—it could be called nothing else. Then he replaced his spectacles, took up his pen, and went on with the writing Richard had interrupted. The young man waited silently, but with a peculiar curve at the corners of his mouth. He had not lived for twenty years with his grandparent without learning that there is a time for the withholding of speech.

The old gentleman finished his page, blotted it, and said, without looking up:

"I will let the house to you. I do not wish to sell it. It would not be worth your while to buy it. Your bird will demand a cage with more gilding before very long. She's too young to know her own mind yet."

His grandson's eyes sparkled with a quick retort which he did not allow to reach his lips. He rose with a quiet, "Very well, sir; thank you," and left the room.

Outside in the street he rejoined his young wife with a smothered cry of delight. "We can hire it!" he told her gleefully. "I did not dare expect as much as that."

"I hoped he would be pleased that we wanted it," she said, with a shadow of disappointment in her eyes.

"Don't you flatter yourself he'd show it. Not he. That'll come later, when we've carried out your little schemes. That is—I hope it will. It will take a long storming of the citadel and a tremendous battering of the fortifications to carry off the enemy into our country. But we'll do it. He shall own some day that my wife——"

He finished the sentence with a look more eloquent than the words he could not find. Then the two walked over to Albemarle Street, to go by the quaint little house with the green blinds, where Evelyn had chosen to live chiefly that she might win Grandfather Hazleton's heart into her keeping.

Putting the place in order took two months. All Richard's spare time was given to the ransacking of the shops, and of certain other places, with Evelyn, for suitable furnishing for the new home. This differed greatly from the ordinary shopping of the newly wedded, the fashion whereof shall be told later.

On a bleak day in December the two, having begun housekeeping, separated at the door of the house in Albemarle Street with a somewhat singular conversation. Evelyn was anxiously scanning the heavens, especially in the north-east.

"Don't you think there's going to be a storm, Richard?" she asked. "The papers say so."

"There surely will, dear. Look at that blackness in the east now."

"Oh, I hope so! If it will only be a real 'nor'easter,' one that will last a day or two—with his rheumatism! But, Richard, it may begin before you get him here. Do hurry!"

Richard ran down the steps laughing, and waved his hat back at her from the bottom.

Read "Love or Duty," our Coronation story.

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"Here's to our desperate schemes, little plotter!" he cried softly. "May a great storm come up and blow into Grandfather Hazleton a fervent appreciation of the blink of our ain fireside. I'll bring him back with me, Evelyn, if it can be done. Meanwhile, don't let the duck burn up!"

He hurried away; and presently Judge Hazleton, sitting gloomily in his library, nursing a left leg which already felt the oncoming storm, heard himself addressed by the familiar cheery voice. He had missed that voice, and felt an ache which he would not own, but which hurt none the less for that.

"Many happy returns, grandfather!" cried Richard, and Richard's handsome face beamed at him from the doorway.

"Come in," said the judge. He said it without much relaxation of countenance, to be sure, but with a milder inflection than he had employed toward his grandson of late.

The young man came in gaily, bringing an atmosphere of fresh air and youth and health with him, as he had ever done. He sat down on the arm of a big chair, opposite his grandfather. He had not removed his overcoat; his hat was in his hand.

"It's a cold day," he said, "but the air is fine, and a breath of it would do you good. Let me order the horses, will you, sir, and come over to Albemarle Street with me? There's a little birthday dinner waiting for you there, and our fireside needs your christening. There's a magnificent old fireplace in Aunt Martha's house—remember it, sir?—and the jolliest fire is roaring up the chimney this minute. Please, grandfather!"

The old man hesitated. Rejection was in his eye, refusal on his lips, but it was a little difficult to meet with his customary curt "no" an invitation like this, bubbling over with goodwill and heartiness. Meanwhile Richard came lightly across the floor and dropped upon one knee before Judge Richard Hazleton. He laid one warm hand on the judge's cold one, looked up, laughing, and sued for the favour.

"Please, sir!" he said. "It's your birthday. You never denied me a favour on your birthday, grandfather."

The judge stirred uneasily, moistened his lips, got slowly and stiffly to his feet, and reached for the bell.

"Well, well, boy," he said, gruffly, "this once! But not again, mind you."

Now Grandfather Hazleton had not addressed one word to Richard's wife since the wedding day—and you will remember that he had not addressed her then. So it might easily have been an embarrassing moment all round when the Hazleton coachman drew up before Aunt Martha's old house in Albemarle Street, and Evelyn appeared at the top of the steps to greet the two coming up them by painful stages.

The black clouds in the north-east were gathering thickly, and the judge's rheumatism was growing very bad indeed. But Richard looked up confidently, with a cheerful "Here we are!" and the blithest voice in the world responded, "I'm so glad! Come in out of this wretched cold to our splendid fire!" And somehow there was no greeting necessary.

Judge Hazleton did not offer to shake hands with young Mrs. Richard, but nobody appeared to notice that, and the two had him out of his overcoat and into a big easy chair in front of the fire before he had time to object or to know what he was about.

They did not try to make him talk. Richard was all about the room, saying gay things first from this corner, then from that. Evelyn flitted in and out, half covered by a big white apron with a most fetching ruffled bib.

Savoury odours floated in each time she opened the dining-room door, and the judge's nostrils detected the delicious fragrance of—was it roast duck? There was a suspicion of spiciness in the air, too, which might or might not be that of mince pies. The judge especially liked mince pies.

There were a few moments when Evelyn called Richard out to assist her with something. Then the judge sat up straight in his chair, turned and glanced sharply about the room.

His first impression, then, had been correct. Instead of being furnished in the latest modern style, the long, low-ceiled apartment was a veritable reproduction of the best of old-time living rooms.

A quaint flowered paper covered the walls; fine pieces of old mahogany stood here and there; a slender-legged table that he could have sworn belonged to his mother was at his elbow. Bits of old china caught his eye upon the chimney-piece; over it hung—yes, actually—a long discarded but undeniably fine portrait of the judge himself in his youthful days.

He heard them coming laughing back, and sank into his chair again, his lips setting tightly. His eyes fixed themselves on the fire, and Richard had to say twice, "Grandfather, our little dinner is served. Will you come out, sir?" before the guest pulled himself together and, with the necessary aid of his grandson's arm, limped slowly out.

Such a dinner! And such a table—for that was what first demanded the grudging attention of his guest.

Surely he recognised those thin, white plates and cups and saucers, with the delicate green sprigs. Absently his finger touched one on the sprigs of his plate. As a boy at his mother's table he had always been impelled to feel them to see if they would push off. They would not push off any more readily now than they would then. He drew away his finger, and his eyes travelled to the walls of the room, and he started slightly in his chair.

"Do you recognise grandmother's old sideboard?" asked Richard, slicing off thin morsels of rich and tender duck with quite a skilful hand for one so new at carving—and everybody knows that ducks are hard carving, too. "And this is her dinner-set. Aunt Patience let us have all these things when she found that we really cared—that Evelyn cared. We do care, sir; and Evelyn more than I. It's all her idea. I suppose I should naturally have started in with a new house and new furniture—varnish not dry, you know—patent oak rockers, and green marble centre-tables, and cheap etchings on the walls——"

"Richard!" How pretty her face was, flushed and laughing in protest, in the soft light from the candles! Richard gave her an answering glance, full of fun and mischief—but with his heart in it, none the less.

"He loves the dear old things just as well as I do!" Evelyn declared, pouring coffee and putting in a generous supply of rich cream.

Then she held the old-fashioned sugar-tongs poised above the green and white sugar-bowl. She looked up full into Judge Hazleton's face with a daring pair of violet eyes.

"How many lumps, grandfather?" she asked, and flushed a rosier red than ever. But her glance did not flinch.

In the short pause that followed, Richard dare not look up; he kept his eyes fixed on the centrepiece. But he listened, with his heart in his mouth. Question and answer had not yet passed between the two.

"Two," said Judge Hazleton, and his black eyes went for an instant deep into the violet ones, with a searching power which made his grandson feel as if he would like to jump between.

But Evelyn met him with a frank smile, dropped in the two lumps and gave him the cup. Richard drew a long breath.

The dinner was superb. Where it came from or who cooked it Judge Hazleton did not know, but it suited his critical taste. It ended with an old-fashioned plum pudding. Comment the guest made none, but he swallowed his share of the pudding to the last crumb.

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Richard smiled to himself as he noted the fact.

"Jove, but the wind blows!" said the young host, as they came back to the fire in the front room. "Hear the windows rattle!"

He raised the curtain and looked out. "It's storming furiously!" he cried. "And by all that's great, grandfather, I believe I didn't tell Michael to come for you!"

"Telephone," said the judge.

"Why, we haven't had one put in yet. Too bad! Of course I can go out and send word from somewhere. But—suppose you don't go out, grandfather? You know such a storm is pretty hard on your rheumatism."

"I must go home to-night!" said the judge, as sternly as if much depended on his return.

He got up and made his way to the front door and opened it. A tremendous blast threw the heavy oak back upon him, knocked his spectacles from his nose, and cut him through with its penetrating chill.

He drew back, his heavy white hair erect and dancing in a most undignified way, and Richard, putting his weight against the door, closed it. Evelyn picked up the spectacles. The judge limped back without a word. The two behind him glanced at one another triumphantly.

"Sing for us, dear," proposed Richard. "Perhaps the worst of the storm will be over presently."

The girl went over to the piano; it was the only modern thing in the room. She played softly, and sang in a clear young contralto voice which had in it a quality of the sort which touches heart-strings. She sang modern songs at first, Grieg and Nevin and Chaminade. But presently she gave them "Annie Laurie."

Then the judge got suddenly up.

"If I must stay," he said, abruptly, "I think I will go to bed."

Evelyn lit a candle, and Richard offered his arm again up the short staircase. The judge climbed slowly, breathing somewhat heavily. Richard led him to the front room and stopped with his hand on the latch.

"We furnished this room, sir," he said, in his clear voice, which nevertheless shook a little, "just for you. We hoped you might like to stay here with us sometimes, and feel that it was home. Aunt Patience sent for most of the things. They came from the old place down in Surrey, and she says they are the ones you and grandmother had when you kept house—when father was a boy. We hope you'll like it, sir. You don't know how much we want to please you, grandfather—Evelyn and I."

He opened the door, and the judge walked in—much as if he would have preferred to stay outside. A small fire crackling cheerily in the odd little fireplace threw its wavering light on the quaint blue and white "landscape" paper which covered the walls.

A four-poster bed, hung with dimity, was there, a shining high mahogany chest of drawers, a little washstand with a blue and white pitcher and bowl. High-backed chairs stood about, with one cosily cushioned big rocker in front of the fire; on the floor lay the prettiest of old Turkey carpets.

Grandfather Hazleton looked about with dazed eyes. They all stood silent for a moment; then a gentle hand fell on his arm, and he stared down for the second time that evening into a well-nigh irresistible pair of eyes.

"It's been such a happiness to get it ready for you!" said the voice to which Richard had long sworn allegiance. "Won't you forgive us for loving each other, and for not being content without your approval and your love?"

It was a long moment, and again his grandson held his breath, feeling that if the elder man spurned the girl now, he, Richard, must henceforth refuse to be to him that which he had been all his life.

But there is a temperature at which the hardest substances melt, and perhaps it was not Judge Hazleton's heart which was at fault, after all, only his pride; and pride cannot endure before love. Suddenly he turned and laid both hands upon Evelyn's shoulders, bent and kissed her gently on the forehead. Then he went over to the fire and sat down.

Richard, with a radiant face, let Evelyn draw him quietly away out into the hall, and noiselessly closed the door. Then he triumphed openly.

"You've done it, little girl, you've done it, bless you!" he whispered.

Then they went silent and joyfully downstairs. But they did not know that in the little bedroom which looked like the home of his youth an old man sat and wiped away the tears—tears which meant things the younger people, with all their love and goodwill, could never understand.

G. S. Richmond.

Might be Awkward.

She: "That's prejudice. Why wouldn't you marry a shop-girl?" He: "Oh, she'd always be calling for cash, you know."

Ought to Have.

First Friend: "Do you have good police protection out your way?" Second Friend: "Do we? Well, I should say so. We have the prettiest servant girl in the town."

After Marriage.

Young Wife (complainingly): "You haven't brought me a box of chocolates since we were married." Young Husband: "That's queer. Come to think of it, you haven't remarked that you *so* enjoyed the smoke of a good cigar since we were married."

Another Bargain.

"Dalton said he felt awfully cheap last night when Miss Savecash accepted him." Morton: "Why?" "Because she never takes anything unless it's a bargain."

Sensation in Court.

"Young man," said the judge sternly, "your face is familiar. Have you ever been in this court before?" "No, sir," replied the young man, "I'm a billiard marker."

A Mild Form.

Madge: "I love Cholly even for his weaknesses." May: "But has he many?" Madge: "One, very pronounced. Kleptomania." May: "Stealing? Oh, how terrible!" "Yes, but they're only—er—kisses."

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WHOLESALE ECONOMY.

Or, How Love's Labour was Lost.

THEY had not gone on a honeymoon, she and her dear hubby; they had determined to stop at home and economise. Her father had given her a cheque for fifty pounds, and Uncle Openpurse one for a hundred.

When hubby had gone away to business after breakfast, she rushed upstairs and put on her bonnet, while her fingers trembled with suppressed excitement and a scarlet flush intermittently suffused her damask cheeks. Looking into her purse for the three-hundred-and-forty-fifth time, to see if the notes were all right, she tripped down the stairs and sought the butcher's shop.

"I want some beef," she smiled.

"I have an excellent cut here, madam; sweet as a nut; it weighs about three pounds."

A brilliant flash of scorn came out of her eye, and struck the portly butcher.

"What is your lowest wholesale price for an ox?"

He quoted twice the amount he had given, and awaited results.

"Please send two of them round as soon as possible to this address—stop, you can make it three. And now I would like some liver; I *do* so love liver and bacon."

The price, to her mind, being moderate, she paid for twenty pounds of liver, and for ten pounds of pork sausages and a quarter of a ton of ice to keep it all cool.

Then she sailed down the street to the grocer, and asked the sum required for butter.

"The best is eighteenpence a pound, m'lydy; can't be beat anywheres."

Her sweet little nose was lifted high in scorn, and the grocer shivered before a withering glance.

"I shall require four tubs, if you please; also seven Cheddar cheeses, and a barrel of moist sugar. If you will quote your lowest wholesale price for treacle, you may send ten pounds, and I should also like a dozen hams, and a box of eggs. This is the address. Good-morning."

The grocer sank into a tub of margarine as her dainty form melted through the doorway. And as he sat there, in a state of collapse, she returned hurriedly, and added an order for two barrels of flour and fifty bladders of lard.

The fishmonger wiped his hands on his apron, and began flopping about a fine hake, when she started to interview him.

"I want rather large quantities of fish, if you please," while her eyes glistened with a strange and glad light. "What are your bloaters a box, or chest, or barrel, or however you sell them? I want some whitebait too, I *love* whitebait. I also shall require four or five dozen eels, if you can let me have them; my husband loves eels. Also, if you have some crabs and lobsters, you might let me have six dozen of each, only they must be alive."

The tradesman swallowed a shrimp and his wonderment, and made entries in a large book, and when she had given him the address she left for the live poultryman's place of business lower down the street.

Mrs. Dasher had a theory of her own about poultry. She was fond of a nice duck, and still more so of a cut from a goose, while she was a perfect Russian in her hankering after turkey. But she never had swallowed any part of one that had been bought dead, for, you see, she had been brought up on a farm. So, after much scrupulous examination, she decided that three dozen roosters, together with a score of ducks, and thirty-three turkeys (the odd three being thrown in because of the quantity bought), and forty-seven geese would suffice her purpose for the time being.

But, you will say, kind reader, is this economy? Read on. Strange and unfathomable are the ways of woman, especially the woman newly married. Mrs. Dasher was economy itself.

On her way back she met a man with a barrow selling oranges. They were large and ripe-looking and mouth-watering, and she asked the price (just as a matter of form), and paid for the lot, and told the man where to take them.

Outside the building where she and her hubby rented four rooms were arranged some half a dozen carts, the practical and satisfactory result of her morning's hard labour. Her eyes glistened, and a glad smile played about her lips as the sight met her gaze.

As she swept round the corner two men were carrying in the carcase of an ox, followed by three others supporting a block of ice in a blanket, and in their immediate footsteps followed a man struggling with the bloaters.

At length they went, and she, dispatching a messenger for her husband, nimbly scrambled over the purchases, and tried to make things a bit straight in the drawing-room, where most of the goods had been placed, owing to want of supervision, before she had come.

After a time she thought she heard her husband calling, but the fowls were singing so sweetly to the accompaniment of the turkeys, that she could not discriminate.

He came through the window at last, for the doors were blocked with goods. He stepped on some split whitebait, which were slippery, and sat down, shooting his legs into the crate of crabs, and bringing down two blocks of ice on his brawny chest, while seven geese resented his efforts to strangle them, and one eel went down the back of his neck and another up the sleeve of his coat.

After the ice had melted, he was able to get up, and then he made his way to where his wife's voice sounded high above the feathered chorus. She could not come to him because, through some mischance, she lay on a bed of eggs, with a sheet of treacle and a counterpane of calves' liver over her.

Mrs. Dasher began to get unhappy. She whimpered. She grumbled, and tried to explain.

"Oh, I'm so miserable," she said, "I didn't know it was going to be like this. I don't think your plan is good. I wish I had taken ma's advice. Oh, I am so miserable."

Before he married her, Dasher had impressed upon her the fact that, to economise, goods should always be bought in quantities.

"Strive to do a wholesale business as much as possible," he had said. "For you get things much cheaper that way. Yes, strive."

She had striven!

T. L. Pearse.

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A CASE OF TRUE LOVE.

Telling how a Girl Saved an Invention from being Stolen.

THE sun was just dipping into the West, and an eager, jostling stream of humanity hurried towards the slow-moving procession of tram-cars. The factories were sending forth their toilers, and men and women and children all seemed bent on reaching their homes as quickly as possible. They filled the trams, and they crowded the platforms of the railway stations. They pushed and jostled and crowded, but it was all done in good-natured spirit. They were too hurried even to offer excuses. And they were too much in earnest to laugh. It was a case of survival of the strenuous.

But there was one girl, pale and slender, who fell behind in this wild rush, and looked quite helplessly at the fast filling cars. She had caught hold of an ornamental lamp-post, and stood waiting for the first rush to be over.

As she lingered there, gazing out across the noisy street, a young man came up a side street whistling merrily. He was walking briskly, but as he neared the kerb he stopped short and stared up the street. He was looking for his car. Then his gaze, quite by chance, fell on the girl. He looked at her sharply and hesitated. Then he stepped towards her and lifted his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but can I be of any assistance?"

The girl turned and looked at him. He was a bright-faced young fellow, and his smile was pleasant to see.

"Thank you," said the girl, "but I think I can manage to get the car."

A little spasm of distress crossed her face, and the young man instantly came nearer.

"I'm afraid you are ill," he said.

"No," she replied, and called up a ghost of a smile. "I sprained my ankle several weeks ago and I'm afraid I turned it again a little as I hurried round the corner. Besides, I don't like the crowded cars. I always wait until the first rush is over. Please don't bother yourself about me. You will miss your car."

"All cars look alike to me," said the young man. "There's nobody to wait my coming. If you don't mind I'll stand by you. What car do you take?"

"The green one," replied the girl. "But really, I wish you wouldn't wait."

"I take the same car," laughed the youth. "That's almost as good as an introduction. Besides, I think we are fellow workmen in the same factory. I'm sure I've seen you coming out of the office."

"I'm in the correspondence department," said the girl.

"And I have charge of the machinery," said the young man. "My name is Arthur Winfield."

The girl hesitated.

"My name is Hester Crane," she said, and blushed a little as the bright-eyed young man lifted his hat.

"There's our car," he cried, "and it isn't a bit crowded. Come on."

As she let go the post he offered his arm. She leant upon it and was very glad of the help it gave, for her ankle was quite stiff. He helped her on and took a seat, and sat beside her.

"There," he said, in his cheery way. "I think we were both wise to wait. This is very much better than being crushed. How far do you go?"

"To Vernon Street," she answered.

"And I go to Maynard Street, two turnings beyond. We are almost neighbours. Will there be somebody waiting for you?"

"My mother," said the girl.

"You're lucky," said the young man. "I've only got a landlady to watch for me. And when she gets tired of watching she clears the table and gives me up as a bad job. I expect she thinks I deserve all the pangs of unrequited hunger."

"I'm afraid she'll think you are not coming to-night," said the girl in a tone of regret.

"Pooh, what of that?" cried the youth. "I'm an inventor, and inventors have to eat sparingly to keep their wits sharpened. Everybody knows that."

The conductor was coming along and Arthur let the girl pay her fare—a privilege that she eagerly embraced.

"Ankle better?" he asked.

"Yes, I am quite sure it is."

"Good. How far do you live from the car line?"

"At the corner of the next street."

"That's quite a walk."

"It isn't very far," said the girl quickly.

The young man smiled and easily turned the subject of conversation to the factory, and that was common ground that interested both. Her work was not hard, she told him, but very monotonous. She had hoped to be a school teacher, and had fitted herself for it, but the school didn't come and she really had to work. The pay was small, but it was sure and she needed it. Perhaps she would be forewoman some day. At present that was the height and end of her ambition.

And Arthur told her something about himself. He was a trained mechanic with a technical education, and he had come to the city to accept a salary that tempted him from a big manufacturing town further north. It was a very good salary, he told her, and the work was not hard, although it entailed a great deal of responsibility. But he had been fortunate. Comparatively few accidents had bothered him, and he fancied the improvements he introduced had put the mechanical outfit on a plane that compared well with anything of the kind in the country. But although the salary was good, he laughingly added, he saved very little of it.

"I have an invention under way that eats up my money almost as fast as I can earn it," he said. "And it eats up all my spare time too. There never was anything like it. It's worse than a spoilt child. I have to pamper it at every turn. But of course it's going to make my fortune. I am as sure of that as I am of breathing."

His eyes sparkled and his confident smile was pleasant to see.

"I hope you are right," said Hester.

"I'm as right as can be," he said, "if they don't steal it from me."

"Steal it from you?" repeated Hester.

"Yes," replied the young man. "That's a thought that continually worries me. You see, the agents of another machine, the one in general use, know I am at work along the same lines, and they greatly fear I have made an important improvement. They are quite right. Naturally they are desperately anxious to find out what my discovery is and forestall me. And I don't think they will have any scruples about the means they employ. In fact, I take my model to pieces every night and hide some parts, and in the morning carry away others. I know they have tried to bribe the servant where I lodge to let them enter my room, and I have to be constantly on the look-out for them."

"That seems a great outrage," said the girl. "It's trying to steal the product of your brain."

"Oh, they'd steal anything that would reveal the secret,"

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laughed Arthur. "I've no doubt they'd kidnap me if they thought they could gain the information that way. But here is your street."

He helped the girl to alight, and despite her protests, walked with her to her home. He paused at the gate.

"Please help me up the steps," said Hester. She clung to his arm as she rapped at the door of the neat little villa. Almost instantly an elderly lady appeared in the doorway.

"Mother," said Hester Crane, "this is Mr. Arthur Winfield, who has lost his dinner on my account. He will stay to tea."

It was Arthur's turn to protest, but a moment later he found himself in the tidy little parlour, while from the inner apartment came the murmur of the women's voices, and the subdued clatter of plates and table-ware.

It was a plain little meal that he was presently bidden to, but everything was palatable, and there was plenty. Arthur enjoyed it all, and showed his enjoyment both with appetite and conversation.

Hester Crane was not at the factory the next day. Arthur found this out when he watched for her at closing time. So it was quite natural he should call in the evening and inquire after her health.

He was cordially greeted by the mother, and a little later by Hester. She had found, she told him, that her ankle needed a complete rest, and so she could not go to the factory again that week.

Arthur meant to go when he had found out about Hester, but he didn't. He lingered, quite forgetful of his neglected invention, and it was only recalled to him when he stood in the hallway, hat in hand.

"I'm afraid," said Hester, "that unwittingly I have caused you to neglect that precious machine."

"I needed a little rest," said Arthur, "and there is no great hurry."

But when he reached his lodgings he worked on the machine until long past midnight.

Arthur had known the Cranes for a fortnight, or perhaps a little longer, when he called one evening filled with a sudden resolve. Hester greeted him, and then a little later he asked for her mother.

"Mrs. Crane," said Arthur, "I want to know if you will take me for a lodger? You see I want to come for several reasons. My work would be safer here for one thing, and then it is so much more like a home. I'm very selfish about this, I know, and I want to be frank about it. The fact is, it is so pleasant here that it quite lures me away from the other place, and—and, you see, if I really lived here why I could enjoy your society and my work, too. That's very ingenuous, isn't it?"

The mother laughed.

"It's certainly very complimentary," she said.

Then she looked at Hester.

"He might have the large front room," she said.

"It is very bare," said Hester.

"I have plenty of things to put in it," cried Arthur. "All I really want is room for a bed and my work-table."

The mother laughed again.

"We might take you on trial," she said.

"And you will let me fix the rate," said Arthur eagerly. "You see it's not an ordinary case."

"You may pay us just what you are paying now," said the lady. "And no more."

"Very well," said Arthur. "My month is up to-morrow."

So he moved in and proved to be just what he had promised, a model lodger.

His coming brought about one change in the family affairs that was highly apppreciated. Hester left the factory, and almost immediately her health improved, and her colour came back, and in Arthur's eyes she grew more beautiful every day.

And now he put in all his spare moments on the invention. He no longer took it to pieces at night. He felt that it was under watchful eyes during his absence. And then one morning he told them it only needed an hour or two of work to finish it.

"And I am going to telegraph Mr. Bagby, the manufacturer, to come on at once and inspect my working model," he said at the breakfast-table."

That morning Hester had a caller. Her mother had gone to the market and she was alone. The caller was a mild-looking man in sober black, who inquired for Mrs. Crane.

"My mother is not in," she said.

"I am sorry," said the man in black. "I am Mr. Dabney, the new pastor at the Congregational Church. I am out making a few calls and regret very much that I am prevented from meeting your estimable mother. Convey to her, please, my sincere regards. Thank you."

He rose to go, and then suddenly clutched at his side with a little groan, and fell back in the chair.

"You are ill!" cried Hester.

"It is m-my heart," he stammered. "Here, take this prescription to the nearest chemist and hurry back with what it calls for. Oh, this pain!" He thrust a crumpled paper in Hester's hands. "Go!" he gasped, and fell back.

Hester ran into the inner room to get her hat, and a second later a rear door slammed. The caller listened for a moment. Then he hastily rose and went to the stairs. He paused and listened again. Then he nimbly ascended the steps.

They were narrow stairs with a sharp turn. There was a smile on the caller's face as he sprang up them.

Then he suddenly recoiled with an oath.

Hester was standing on the upper landing.

"Well," she said, and her voice was wonderfully steady.

"Stand aside," he snarled. "I'm a desperate man."

"Wait!" cried Hester. "Do you see this bottle? It is ammonia, and uncorked. I thought it would revive you. Come a step nearer and I'll fling it all in your wicked face."

The fellow hesitated, scowling at the resolute eyes above him.

"Go," said Hester.

He slunk back step by step.

"I ought to kill you," he snarled. And then he was gone.

Hester cautiously slipped downstairs and bolted the door.

Then she sank on the lower step and cried.

She told Arthur that evening of this adventure. He turned a little pale and gave her an eloquent look.

The next night the eminent manufacturer came, and Arthur was closeted with him for over an hour. When he had gone the young man called Hester and her mother.

"Congratulate me," he said with outstretched hands.

They did, and most sincerely.

"And the terms are satisfactory?" the elder lady inquired.

"More than satisfactory," laughed Arthur. "He is to give me £20,000 down, and a royalty of £100 on every machine manufactured. We have signed a joint agreement."

"That's fine," cried the lady. "But I'm sure your good fortune will not spoil you. Any way, it mustn't cause you to forget old friends."

"I'm going to forget some people," laughed Arthur, "but not the dear friends to whom I owe so much."

"But you owe us nothing. Why, you even pay in advance."

And she and Arthur laughed at this pleasantry, but Hester looked a little serious.

"I want you to go out and take a walk with me, Hester," said Arthur. It was the first time he had called her that. "I need a little cooling off. Get your pretty hat, please, the one you keep upstairs. This is a special occasion, you know."

As she ascended the stairs Arthur turned to her mother.

"Dear lady," he softly said, "I have another venture to settle to-night, and it means more to me than the first one. I have only waited until the first was a success, and that has given me courage. I am going to ask Hester to be my wife."

There was a light step on the stairs.

Arthur could see the tears glistening in the mother's eyes as she looked up at him, but she smiled brightly and nodded.

And half an hour later, when she opened the door for the returning pair and caught sight of Hester's radiant face, she knew all was well.

W. R. Rose.

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An Unconscious Confederate.

"WHATEVER makes you look so glum, my dear fellow?" asked Dick Faynes, as his friend turned slowly, half unconsciously, in his chair to see who had thus abruptly entered. "Anything very dreadful happened?"

"Well, I can't say that," answered Alec Buxton with an awkward laugh, rising and shaking his visitor's hand warmly. "I was thinking of—— But come and sit down. I'm glad to see you. What has brought you here?"

"I came to ask if you could make it convenient to spend a week with us down home. Getting up a little party, you know, and you're a good fellow, and a capital player at tennis, and——" Here Dick broke off suddenly, and, becoming more serious, inquired again if anything had happened. "You look so worried and perplexed," he explained. "Something gone wrong since the party a fortnight ago, eh?"

"Everything—er—that is, nothing much!" was the confused reply.

Dick stared at his friend; it was so unlike him. He drew his chair slightly nearer to Alec's and remarked laconically:

"That's nonsense, you know! Better tell me straight out."

"Very well," said Alec, just as laconically. "I'm in love"—Dick stared harder than before—"with your cousin!" Dick jumped from his seat and sat down again in amazement.

"You!" he ejaculated.

"Oh, yes, I am always doing just what nobody ever dreams I shall do!" said Alec savagely. "That's my lot in life—to act wrongly all the time. It seems to have begun with my birth; they wanted a girl, and I was another son. Then they gave me a Scotch name because we are not in the least bit Scotch, I suppose. And everything has been contrary ever since. I was intended for the Church and I take to the Bar; I was——"

Here he was interrupted by a merry laugh from Faynes.

"Don't go over the list, Alec! I am sorry I expressed surprise. But why that should make you glum, I can't understand; people are happy when they are in love. *I* was, when I wrote poetry to Nance Marsh. She married another fellow, but as I was only seventeen, and she was twenty-five, perhaps it was as well! But with you and Nora it's different. It's time to look sad when she refuses you! Never meet troubles half way!"

Alec's face became less gloomy as he listened to his friend's chatter. Dick Faynes was rather a shallow individual, one on whom troubles make little impression, and to whom deep feelings are unknown, but who acted as a gleam of sunshine.

"That's just the trouble, old fellow," said Alec. "I don't think I shall have to wait long for a refusal, supposing I have courage enough to get so far as a proposal. That is just what is worrying me. I am deeply in love with her; it was love at first sight, and I feel that she is the only woman for me."

"I was like that about Nance Marsh. I'm like that with every girl I fall in love with," observed Dick Faynes with such evident sincerity that Buxton, who was at first inclined to resent the idea that he could be "like that" with any other girl than Nora, was ultimately compelled to laugh.

Alec Buxton was just the opposite of Faynes; he was just as earnest and broad-shouldered as Faynes was light-hearted and slim. He couldn't feel angry with his young friend.

"I don't see why you should worry about Nora," continued Dick. "I'm sure she is very fond of you—that is, I mean she will be, or she ought to be, you know! Why don't you ask her if she—er—likes you?"

The logic of the question was apparent to so deep a thinker as Alec. That was what a sensible man would do, but Alec hesitated because he had such a modest opinion of himself.

"I suppose the affair has hardly gone far enough; I don't know that I actually paid her any special attention——"

"Yes, you did!" said Dick with much assurance. "I noticed it; so did others; and I believe *she* did."

"Do you think so?" queried Alec, his face reddening with pleasure and bashfulness. "Oh, but I am not her style. Women like a bold, daring fellow; one who—who——"

"Don't you upset yourself about that!" was Dick's reassuring remark. "You go in and win, old fellow" (encouragingly). "Some girls will marry anyone, so don't be afraid!"

"Thank you! But I scarcely class your cousin among them."

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Faynes, in a tone of vexation. "I am always saying things wrong or people are always taking what I say in a wrong light. I meant—I meant—— Look here! You make one of our party! Nora will be there, and if you think that she wants you to do some daring deed before she will fall in love with you, there ought to be plenty of chances of that at Hilton Manor. There's a river, where you always stand a chance of being upset if you want to—I mean, if you aren't careful. And tennis, and cycling, and cricket, and all sorts of dangerous things. You must come!"

"I will!" responded Alec, making a sudden resolve. "But," he added quizzingly, "I must try to keep clear of all those deadly amusements you have just mentioned."

Dick laughed. "I dare say I said it all wrong, but I mean well, you know!" Alec was sure of that, although the fact was not to be deduced from his friend's rather incoherent observations. "I'll help you all I can, for I honestly believe that Nora and you would make a good match. I should like to see Nora married," he continued reflectively. "That would give the other girls a chance, you see. All the fellows want her, and if she were not to be had, they would have to turn their attention to the others. Yes, it would be a good move for you to captivate Nora by doing something daring. I'll think of a plan and let you know. So you'll come; that's settled," he rattled on. "Formal invites to be sent the day after to-morrow. Good-bye, now! I must be off!"

On the following day Alec Buxton received a letter from Faynes which at first made him angry, and then amused him.

"What a creature he is!" he muttered, seating himself at his writing table, with Dick's letter in front of him. "I believe I am right in supposing that I am not the kind of man to enslave her affections, and that she wants a bold, dashing fellow, but I'm not going to play such tricks as *that*, Mr. Richard Faynes!"

He took up his pen, wrote a few words on the blank space

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under the signature, then placed the letter in an envelope and addressed it to Faynes.

The party at Hilton Manor was a great success; the weather was grand, and the visitors were having one of the pleasantest holidays that any of them could remember or desire. The greater part of the fortnight was past, and as the day of departure grew nearer the young people became the more determined to make the most of the time that remained.

Alec Buxton was, perhaps, the least happy; it would be incorrect to say that he was unhappy, but his pleasure was mixed with sadness at the thought that he had made no progress, so far as he could see, with his wooing of Nora Faynes. They had been together a good deal; she had been his partner in various games, but he seemed no "forrader."

That very afternoon he was going for a row with her on the little river which, at one part of the estate, widened into a large lake. He would have her to himself for an hour and—would he be able to summon up enough courage? On the second day he would be leaving Hilton and this might be his last chance.

Chatting agreeably they went down the river till they entered the lake, he rowing, she steering.

"Why don't you ask her if she—er—likes you?"

"I imagine that this lake was made at some distant period; it is not a natural formation, is it?" Alec paused a moment to look at Nora and listen to her answer.

"It was made by the orders of one of my ancestors for the purpose of giving pleasure to his bride," was the reply. "At least, that is the story. I suppose they, or she, used to row on it, but it must have cost him a lot of money to gratify that whim."

"Happy man to be able to gratify the wish of the woman he loved!" said Alec suddenly, nerving himself with an effort. "What does the cost matter, when it is done for love? Happy man, to have the opportunity of doing something for her. I wish I might be as fortunate."

In his excitement he pulled at the oars with all his strength, and made the boat almost leap into the centre of the lake. Nora gave a little cry that brought him to his senses.

"You frightened me!" she declared. "You pulled with such force that I thought the boat was going over. You pull more powerfully with one arm than the other."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Faynes," he said contritely. "I fear that I am very awkward, but my feelings got the better of me."

"I expect we shall reach the centre without another stroke of the oar," remarked Nora, with pretended innocence, although a faint flush appeared on her fresh cheeks. Her gaze was directed over his head, but she was watching his gleaming eyes and the eager expression on his countenance, while her heart beat somewhat more rapidly.

"*I* would like to do something for the woman I loved—for the woman I *love*—but where is the opportunity for *me?*"

He waited for an answer, but Nora was intently gazing at something over his head.

"There is no chance for me!" he continued bitterly. "It was never intended that I should do anything heroic to—— Hallo! What's wrong?"

He might well ask. The little boat was rapidly filling with water; so rapidly that it was evident that a tolerably big hole had been made in the bottom.

"The boat has a hole in it!" exclaimed Nora, turning slightly pale. "Row, row quickly, so that we get to the side before it fills! Oh, dear, we are too far out!"

It was true. They were in the very centre of the lake and the boat was filling so quickly that it would sink before even Alec's strong arms could urge it many yards through the water. Their feet were soaked now, and the water was coming higher and higher. Alec saw the danger, and rose to the occasion.

"We are in for a wetting, Miss Faynes, I fear, but it shall be nothing worse if my strength and knowledge of swimming can avail anything. Here is my bowler"—picking up the hat which he had taken off and substituted by a soft cap—"bale out as hard as you can while I row."

A few seconds sufficed to show that this expedient was useless, and Alec braced himself for the effort of a swim with a burden to the bank some fifty yards distant. His face was grave as he threw off his coat and vest.

"Can you swim, Miss Faynes?"

"Not a bit!" responded Nora in a hushed whisper. Her face was pale, but she tried to keep a brave expression on her face. "There is no one near enough to hear us if we shout, is there? You can swim?"

"A little," returned Alec, doubtfully. "What a fool I was not to practise swimming! You must let me hold you up with one hand while I strike out with the other."

"You must not sacrifice yourself for me!" said Nora, in a tone that was intended to be very determined, but was in reality a dismal failure.

"It is the chance I have longed for!" cried Alec. "I will

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save you, if the effort kills me. I can at least prove my love, whether it is reciprocated or not."

The next moment they were in the water. Nora's flowing dress helped to keep her up at first, and she quietly obeyed his orders to trust to him and not become so frightened as to try to grasp him. How strong he was! He was anything but a good swimmer, but his strength and his love worked wonders, and they reached shallow water just as his strength was giving out. To a good swimmer the feat would have been almost insignificant, but to Alec it had been exhausting, and he sank on the ground, done up, as he after phrased it.

He was soon able to walk, and the two hurried along towards the house, where they received every attention. Alec was happy, for he felt that he had won a wife that afternoon.

He was sure of his conquest on the following morning, when he met Nora. Neither was, fortunately, any the worse for the adventure. They shook hands; not a word was spoken, but they looked into each other's eyes, and then he drew her unresisting to him and kissed her.

He was in the seventh heaven of delight all that morning, although he could not get a second *tête-à-tête* with his beloved one. Judge of his dismay then, when he succeeded in discovering her alone in the afternoon and was rebuffed by a flashing eye and a gesture of indignation.

"I thought you were a gentleman, and I find that you are a trickster, a man who would stoop to deceit to—to gain a woman's affections!"

Bewildered as he was by her words, crushed by her contempt, he could not help noticing how pretty she was in her anger.

"What is it, Nora?" he asked appealingly. "Those are hard words, and undeserved I have done nothing of which I am ashamed!"

"Then it takes a lot to shame you!" How hard and cruel she was! "Read that!"

She handed him a letter, which he at once recognised as the precious communication sent to him by Dick Faynes after the conversation in Alec's room. Mechanically he ran through it again, although the contents were burnt in his brain. The wording of that letter had entirely escaped him till now; even during the adventure on the water it had not occurred to him, strangely enough. This was what Dick had written:

"I'll arrange that affair for you, so that you can do something gallant in order to win my cousin. It will be as easy as A B C. You can manage it so that there will be no danger, and you must make a fuss about it, so that she will think a lot of you! Go for a row on the river, and get on the lake. I'll make a hole in the bottom of the boat and stop it up with a big bung which you can easily kick out. You will get a wetting, but what's that? Let me know if this suits you, and I'll have the hole ready for the day when I hear that the row is to come off."

"The boat has a hole in it!" exclaimed Nora, turning slightly pale.

And underneath the signature Alec had written: "Splendid, if you can manage it! But you can't!"

He had written the words jestingly, for the idea was absurd; but in cold black and white the words appeared like an assent to the plan. And Nora believed that he had carried out the scheme!

"I found that letter in my room this morning," said Nora coldly. "It must have dropped out of Dick's pocket when he came to see me yesterday afternoon. I understand now why he asked such peculiar questions about our terrible adventure, and why he looked serious when I told him that the boat filled in the *centre* of the lake! Perhaps I ought not to have read the letter, but something caught my eye, and I felt that I had a right to read it. And you agreed!" Oh, the scorn with which she uttered those last words!

"I did not!" protested Alec, writhing in mental pain. "I scoffed at the idea when the letter arrived. I knew nothing

Read "Love or Duty?"—our Coronation story.

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of the hole in the boat, and I never dreamt that he would do such a thing!"

But she was obdurate; she had been played with, and her wounded vanity filled her heart to the exclusion of every other sentiment.

"You tricked me, pretended that you were a poor swimmer—deceived me!" She could say no more; her rage choked her. She was not only angry at the trick; she was angry also that this man was not what she believed him to be. She loved him, and he was unworthy!

"Stay here till I find Dick! You must!" (as she shook her head) "You owe me that much!"

He rushed off like a madman, and she remained motionless. Presently she heard Dick's voice.

"Here, gent—ly! You're jerking all the breath—out—of—me! I'm coming quickly enough, and there's another day to-morrow, isn't there?"

Then Alec burst into the room again, dragging Dick.

"Explain all about it, or I'll——" Alec stopped, unable to think of a threat sufficiently awful.

Dick shook himself, and smoothed his ruffled garments. He looked from Alec to Nora, recalling some of the incoherent remarks of Alec on the way, and then he seemed to realise the position. He went penitently to his cousin, took her hand and kissed her in a boyish affection.

"I did it, Nora. I knew Alec was chaffing me when he wrote that—I know his style, you see, and he told me so next day. But I thought it was a good idea and I carried it out. I thought there would be some sort of a fuss, and Alec would help you, and you would think a lot of him, and he is a good sort, you know. But I forgot that you might be in the middle of the lake! And—I think I'll go for a soldier or a clergyman, or something. I always seem to make a mess of things!"

There was no mistaking the young fellow's sincerity. Nora had only one lingering doubt, but she did not like to retract all she had said, it was so awkward to apologise! So she made the most of one point.

"But Alec—Mr. Buxton, I mean—he *must* have thought of it during the adventure."

"Suppose he did, what difference would it have made?" asked Dick, boldly championing his friend. "He couldn't have said 'This is nothing; we are only pretending. The water coming into the boat is only in fun; we are only making believe that we are getting wet and that the boat is sinking.' How could he? But I don't expect that he gave it a thought. It's strange how things slip your memory when you're so deeply in love as that. It was so with me and Nance Marsh. Oh, you needn't laugh! I *was* in love with that girl!"

In spite of herself, Nora had burst into a laugh that was half a cry on hearing this lucid and amusing explanation. Alec took advantage of this to bundle Dick out of the room and take Nora in his arms.

Dick Faynes is to be best man, although Nora says that he doesn't deserve to be.

George Day.

Briggs: "I have never told you about the smart things my little boy does and says, have I?" Braggs: "You never have." Briggs: "Then don't you think you can find it convenient to lend me £5?"

Chappie: "I'd just like to know what you mean by being engaged to both Cholly and me at once." Miss Pinkie: "Why, bless you, there is no harm done; you can't either of you afford to marry me, you know."

Magistrate: "It is very disgraceful that you should beat your wife so unmercifully." Prisoner: "Well, your worship, she aggrawated me by keepin' on sayin' she'd 'ave me up afore that bald-'eaded old 'umbug, meaning your worship." Magistrate: "You are discharged."

Damsel (fishing for compliments): "No, Captain Judson, I'm not going to the dance to-morrow night, for I hear there's to be a pretty girl from town present, and there will be no chance for poor me." Gallant but Inexperienced Officer: "Oh, do come; I don't like pretty girls."

Your Editor Chats.

I have had a letter from a subscriber, who tells me that she has hit upon a novel and most entertaining method of transforming an ordinary and uninteresting screen into a most delightful and striking piece of decoration. She has preserved all our recent pictorial covers, and has pasted them on to the screen, with a very pretty colour effect. Her friends, calling upon her, naturally want to know all about the pictures, and my correspondent then relates the story of each sketch as it has appeared in the paper, and thus has managed to provide her friends with many a half hour's pleasant entertainment, which she would otherwise have spent racking her brains for something to keep the conversation going. As the covers appear so she adds them to those already on the screen.

For **this week's Competition** I want you to make an English word out of the following letters: R, I, I, I, S, M, A, B, U, U, Q, L, E, E. There is no necessity for you to use every letter, but the competitor who sends in a word containing the most letters is, of course, the one to receive the first prize. This will take the form of a massive and really handsome **solid silver pencil-case,** while the ten competitors who come next will receive **cut glass, solid silver-topped scent-bottles** and **rolled gold charms.** As before, postcards only must be used, and these should be addressed to the "Competition Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden." Efforts should reach us not later than first post on July 2nd.

By the way, two printer's errors crept into the result of our Rivers' Competition, published in the issue dated June 14th. The name of River No. 33 should be Awe instead of Awa as printed, and No. 57 should of course be Deel instead of Beel. Our reader can only account for the slips by the fact that we went to press just after Peace had been proclaimed!

I don't think I ever had such a large response to a competition as that which I received to the "Opinion Competition." The three most popular stories in the issue dated June 7th were, according to the consensus of opinion:

1. The Honeysuckle and the Bee.
2. The Sound of a Voice.
3. The Great Nag-a-Por Diamond.

Only five competitors gave them correctly in their right order, so the prize of £1 has been divided equally amongst them:

F. Holworthy, 2 Hammelton Road, Bromley.
Miss E. Daws, 45 Kent House Road, Beckenham.
A. MacPherson, 49 Mountjoy Square, Dublin.
Miss J. Wyllie, 14 Robb Street, Springburn.
Mrs Kingsworth, 202 New Road, Chatham.

Handsome gold-plated pencil-cases have been awarded to:

R. Robinson, 80 Palatine Road, Blackpool.
F. W. Brook, Ivy Cottage, Greenhead Road, Huddersfield.
L. H. Clark, 32 Beauval Road, Dulwich Rise, S.E.
H. Jones, 5 Afton Crescent, Paisley Road West, Glasgow.
F. W. Davies, 16 Brimmington Road, Peckham.
G. Page, 128 Sweetman Street, Wolverhampton.
W. Bull, 63 De Beauvoir Road, Reading.
H. Carton, 277 Hillman Street, Antrim Road, Belfast.
H. Somers, Special Works, Stanley Street, Sheffield.
A. H. Weaton, 210 Ferndale Road, Brixton.
G. Irving, 127 Hodge Lane, Salford.
C. Dowling, 5 Laurance Pountney Lane, E.C.
A. Barnes, 48 Dover Street, Unthank Road, Norwich.
F. Addison, 40 Margrove Park, near Guisbrough.
W. Rowland, 2 Stanley Place, Tranmere, Birkenhead.
C. Hayward, 9 South Street, Dorchester.
S. Thomas, Peterwell House, West Street, Builth Wells.
Miss A. Steele, 6 Barclay Ter., Beulah Rd., Walthamstow.
E. Christy, 48 Clifton Street, Garston, Liverpool.
Mrs. Hall, 30 Witham, Hull.
Mrs. Carsons, 23 Cumberland Market, Regent's Park, N.W.
H. Wyllie, 14 Robb Street, Springburn.
W. Snow, 72A Taff Street, Pontypridd.
G. Scotchmoor, 26 Morris Road, Poplar, E.
F. J. Wilson, 17 Miller Street, Liverpool.

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A Perfect Gentleman.

FOGG has a neat way of turning a compliment now and then. Seeing the elderly Miss Pangley in the street the other day, he tried to avoid her, but could not succeed. When they met, said Miss Pangley: "Oh, you naughty man, you wanted to cut me!" Replied Fogg blandly: "I should be cutting a pretty figure shouldn't I?" Miss Pangley tells her friend, Miss Sagegreen, that Mr. Fogg is a perfect gentleman.

Preparing the Way.

JOHN: "Sallie, ef I was ter ask you if you'd marry me, do you think you'd say yes?" Sallie: "I—er—think so." John: "We-ell, ef I ever get over this 'ere bashfulness I'll ask yer some o' these times."

Made a Mistake.

LADY (to tramp): "No, I shall not give you anything. You look strong and hearty, and well able to work." Tramp: "Ah, ma'am, you shouldn't judge people by their looks, I thought you looked a kind-hearted lady, but I find you ain't."

Probably.

LITTLE GIRL: "When your feets is cold you mus' put zem in cold, awful cold water—mamma says so." Little Boy: "What good does that do?" Little Girl: "I don't know, but I s'pects it makes us think our feet wasn't so cold as we thought they was."

He Knew Too Much.

LITTLE Johnny had been told he must be punished, but that he might choose between a whipping and being shut up in a dark closet. After a moment's painful thought he said: 'Well, papa, if mamma'll do it, I think I'll be whipped; but if you are going to whip me I think I'll be shut up."

The Perfume was Familiar.

THE latest anecdote about an old lady who thinks that she "knows everything" is how she went to visit her sister, and as she entered the room her nieces said: "Good evening, auntie, we are glad you have come: we are going to have tableaux this evening." "Yes, I know," was the reply, "I smelt 'em."

She Knew Johnny.

"Now," said the teacher, "suppose I should give you and Johnny an apple divided into four parts, and Johnny was to take two of the pieces, how many would you have left?" "None," answered the little girl. "None," echoed the teacher "I'm afraid you don't know the lesson." "'Tain't that, ma'am, you don't know Johnny."

Mrs. Grundy's Waist.

A LITTLE schoolgirl asked her teacher what was meant by "Mrs. Grundy." The teacher replied that it meant "the world." Some days after the teacher asked the geography class to which this little bud of promise belonged: "What is a zone?" After some hesitation the girl brightened up and replied: "I know. It's a belt round Mrs. Grundy's waist!"

Glad of the Opportunity.

A YOUNG fellow who had just begun to shave for a beard stepped into a hairdresser's shop, and after a great swagger desired to be shaved. The hairdresser went through the usual movements, and the prig jumped up with a flourish and exclaimed: "What is the charge?" "Oh, no charge," replied the barber. "No charge? How is that?" "Why, I am always thankful when I can get a soft calf-skin to sharpen my razor on."

Many a Time.

OLD LADY (in a shoe shop): "Have you felt slippers?" Small Boy Assistant (solemnly): "Yes, ma'am, many a time."

Possibilities.

HOGGS: "Do you think that a man can serve two masters?" Henpeck: "Well, sometimes. He may have a wife and grown daughter, you know!"

An Awful Catastrophe.

HUSBAND: "My dear, we will have to begin to economise at once." Wife: "Dear me! What has happened?" Husband: "Cigars have gone up."

The Height of Meanness.

THE meanest man on record is the one who said recently to a young lady: "No, I'd rather not have you take my arm. It does no good and wears out my coat sleeve."

Alive to Opportunities.

"YOUR behaviour is most singular, sir," said a young lady to a gentleman who had just stolen a kiss. "If that's all," said he, "I will soon make it plural."

Misunderstood.

HOPEFUL YOUTH: "Is Miss De Cash in?" Servant: "Yis, sor." Hopeful Youth: "Is she engaged?" Servant: "Yis, sor; but he ain't here this evening. Come in."

How to Tell.

GEORGE: "Suppose a fellow's best girl gets angry when you ask for a kiss." Henry: "Take it without asking." George: "Suppose she gets angry then." Henry: "Then you've got some other fellow's girl."

His Means of Support.

WOMAN: "You seem to be a strong, healthy man. Can't you get along?" Man: "No, mum. I hain't had no means of support since last July." Woman: "Were you thrown out of work?" Man: "No, mum, but me wife broke her arm, and she's not been able to do a week's washing since."

On Kisses.

AN eminent surgeon says that a "kiss on the lips ought to be felt at least twenty minutes afterwards, and that kissing produces a sensation which the system requires to keep it in a healthy condition." Bless his dear old heart, there is a man who thoroughly understands a good thing.

Heaven on Earth.

LITTLE BOY: "I wish mammas went to business every day and papas stayed home and kep' house." Auntie: "What for?" Little Boy: "'Cause mammas always buys sweets w'en they goes out, and papas never tries to keep things clean w'en they stays in."

Too Candid.

MISS PLAINFACE (an heiress): "Mr. Cashunter, you are the first man who ever kissed me in my life. Do you believe me when I tell you this?" Her Affianced: "Believe you? Well, I should say so!" And now the engagement is declared off.

Pa's Grace.

LITTLE LUCY (to minister who has just finished a very long grace before dinner): "My papa don't say all that grace." Minister: "What does your papa say, my little girl?" Little Lucy: "Oh, my papa lifts the covers and says, 'Oh, my, what a dinner!'"

Wanted His Fee.

"I HOPE you don't associate with that man I saw you speak to in the street just now!" "Associate with him! What do you take me for? That man, sir, is one of the most rascally, corrupt, sneaking, under-handed, low-down, villainous, and depraved scoundrels that ever managed to keep out of gaol!" "I know it. But why are you on speaking terms with him at all?" "Why, I'm—er—his lawyer."

Behind the Green Shutters.

What was there Concealed, and how it was Brought to Light.

It was the only house in the lane. The lane itself was in that somewhat lonely district lying between Camberwell Green and Dulwich.

It is a district much affected by tramps and loaters of every description, who are ever on the prowl for plunder, when it may be annexed without trouble to themselves.

The lane in question was only, so to speak, a sort of land creek of the greater sea of the main road. Two tall, ghostly elm trees kept guard at the entrance to it, while its blind end was bounded by a dilapidated, tarred, weather-boarded palisade; from behind which rose a dark tangle of trees and undergrowth, depressing in its look of wild neglect and hopeless desolation.

A gate there was in the palisade, but with nothing on it to indicate the name of the house within.

Even the lane had no official designation, being known to all and sundry as "Dog Kennel" Lane; tradition having it that a previous tenant of the property had kept a pack of large dogs, to the widely-expressed terror of the neighbourhood.

At the time, however, of this story, the dogs had long since disappeared, but the name had stuck.

From the main road the house was plainly visible; that is, the first and second floors. It was a brick house, square, uncompromising, and gloomy in its two-hundred-year-old garb.

One peculiarity it had; one, indeed, which invariably struck strangers as being queerly quaint.

All the windows of the first storey, facing the main road (the front of the house, in fact) were provided with outside green, louvred shutters which, both by night and by day, were closely shut to.

The people living thereabouts were tired of speculating as to the meaning and possible object of this evident desire on the part of the occupant or occupants to secure secrecy for someone or something.

The present tenant had been in possession some three years or more, but during the whole of that period had been seen by no one.

Whether or no there were any others in the family none could say. The coming had been in the night; the policeman on the nearest beat declaring that all he had seen, about two hours after midnight, was a large pantechnicon van turn into the lane and straightway disappear through the gates, opened on the instant and shut to again immediately. Asked if he saw the van pass out, and if he had questioned the men in connection with it, he replied in the negative.

"I'll swear that van never came out!" he said, "for I watched the end of the lane right up to the time I was relieved, and you may take it from me that my eyes are as good as most people's, and perhaps better."

That settled it; and when no sign of life appeared about the place during the whole three years which followed, it came to be pretty generally allowed that a mystery of no common sort concealed itself behind the green shutters of the first floor of the house in the lane.

And so it might have gone on indefinitely as an unsolved mystery but for an unexpected accident, and its consequences.

It was a lovely day in August, and Hugh Charteris, crack automobilist, and motor record breaker on Continental soil, tooled along the King's highway in his "Panhard," at a speed hardly in strict harmony with the notions of the Surrey County Fathers.

He was alone, for he liked the solitude and independence of absolutely exclusive self-management.

Right away from the start from his Kensington flat his drive had been without a hitch. Then, as he came abreast of Dog Kennel Lane, the machine, without a sign of warning, suddenly stopped dead.

The shock projected him over the front of the car, landing him on one shoulder in a heap on the road.

What to do for the moment he did not know. The shock of the fall and a nasty bruise or two making him to feel just a bit bewildered.

Then two or three road skirmishers put in an appearance.

"Here!" cried Charteris to one such, "who lives in the house at the end there?"

"Dunno, guv'nor."

"Well, bang at the gate and get somebody—anybody—to come and help me put the thing right."

"It ain't no good, mister," put in another tired-looking member of the tramp tribe, "they gives nothin' away there."

"My good man, I didn't say they did! Just do as I tell you, and—it will be half-a-crown in your pocket."

Upon this, three pairs of semi-shod feet moved in the direction of the gate.

Before, however, they could reach it, Charteris, lifting his eyes to get a view of the house, saw one of the midmost shutters part ever so little, a small white hand, with just a suspicion of a whiter face, appearing in the shadow of the opening.

Always impulsive, and ever keenly alive to the romantic in life, the disabled motorist raised himself by an effort on to his feet, supporting himself against the side of the car.

Shouting to the three men to "hold on!" he waved his white handkerchief, as vigorously as he was able, with his uninjured hand.

Whoever it was that was behind the shutters must have seen his signal of distress, as they must certainly have heard his voice, when raised to stay the tramps' besiegement of the gate.

Anyway, the shutter was quickly closed, and help seemed further away than ever.

"That was a girl's face—if a pale one, and a pretty girl, too—or my eyes deceive me. Here, you fellows! take that, and be off!" (throwing half a dozen shillings among them). "I'll manage this business myself."

Then a policeman strolled up from the direction of Camberwell, and to him Charteris appealed for protection for his machine while he tried his own fortune at the gate in the palisade.

"Lor' bless you, sir!" said the constable, with a half smile, "you may knock and ring all day, and it'll be no use. Even *we* don't know who it is lives there, or whether it's man

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or woman. Everything, rates, taxes, rent, is paid by a big firm of lawyers in Westminster, while food and stores are brought in from town twice a week at night-time, in a small covered cart, which, somehow, always gets away again without any of us being able to interview the driver. There's only this one gate, so I suppose they manage to dodge us. What for, I don't know, for we couldn't touch 'em."

"Well, policeman, all you say only whets my curiosity to know more. Beside, I want help to right this confounded thing."

He fully expected to find the gate bolted and barred against all comers. To his astonishment, and to the astonishment of the onlooking officer, the gate responded to a slight push of the hand.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said A. R. 1, his eyes opened to their widest. "Why, I'll swear that, an hour ago, when I came round, and tried it, it was as fast as the gate of Holloway Castle."

He looked still more in amazement as Hugh Charteris, passing through, the gate closed quickly after him.

"Here! I say! I can't stand by this car all day! Come back! What are you going to do about it?"

But Charteris was either out of earshot, or designedly "played deaf."

The three tramps had moved off at sight of authority, but there was a little crowd of suburban idlers gathered round the derelict, busily picking up crumbs of curiosity.

Leaving the car to whatever Fate might have in store for it, the bewildered policeman, in sheer desperation, made for the gate in pursuit of the car's owner.

An attempt, however, to successfully repeat the latter's "open sesame" experiment ended in utter failure, for the gate was now, in his own words, "as fast as the gate of Holloway Castle."

A. R. 1 was not a superstitious man, but he began to think that, after all, the old wives' fables of the country-side that knew him as a boy, might have a certain amount of truth in them.

Soon came along the Inspector, who quickly decided that the car must be trundled to the station-yard, seeing that its owner had other business on hand—could not be found, in fact.

"The law won't allow us to force an entrance," said the big man in reply to the suggestion of a bystander, eager for exploration of the "forbidden land." "Whoever lives there haven't done anything. If there was murder now going on inside, or a burglary, or anything like that, it would be different."

"Yes, sir," said his subordinate; "but how about the gate being locked and unlocked like a conjuring trick—and those shutters at the first-floor windows that are always shut?"

"Yes, of course. I know—I know!" said the other, with a superior air of contemptuous repression; "but you can't say anything to a man for doing as he likes with his gates, so long as he doesn't wilfully encourage the thieving sort; while if he chooses to close every shutter inside or outside his house, you can't take upon you to say he shan't."

Plenty of willing hands volunteered to shift the car to the station, the Inspector accompanying the expedition, to see that no trick was played.

A. R. 1, in obedience to orders, remained behind to wait possible events, and, as the car was the chief object of public attraction, found himself left alone with his thoughts.

It might have been ten minutes after the departure of the others that the silence was suddenly broken by the muffled sound of a pistol shot in the direction of the house, as if the weapon had been fired inside the building.

Probably A. R. 1 was ignorant of the axiom that "the man who hesitates is lost," but he at least acted in the spirit of it, for, throwing instructions, prudence, and everything else to the winds, he settled his helmet firmly on his head, drew, and tightly gripped his truncheon, and sought a spot in the fence where he could more easily climb over. The gate was out of the question, being higher than the fence, and cruelly spiked at top.

"Inspector or no Inspector! I'll see what's up; and what's become of that motor chap!" he said, as he struggled over the rotten paling, and dropped down on the other side into a mass of thorny undergrowth.

Before he could pull himself together a hand was at his throat, and a man's harsh voice hissed in his ear: "If you move a hair, you're a dead man!"

* * * * *

When Hugh Charteris, after he had passed through the gate, found, by the noise of key-turning and bolt-shooting, that he was virtually a prisoner, his first thought was to turn and demand an explanation of the individual who had locked and barred him in.

But he could see nobody.

The air of mystery and secrecy about the place was beginning to worry and to exasperate him.

Try as he would, however, he could not shake off the impression that somewhere within the uncanny house there was someone whose life was destined to mingle with, and run parallel, with his own.

It was this idea which decided him to penetrate the seeming mystery, and to give his help to anyone, man, woman or child, who might be in need of it.

In pursuance of this determination, and forgetting all about his property in the lane, he moved along the weedy, dirt-strewn path towards the house.

For a man who was a barrister (if briefless), Charteris was, as we have said, strongly tinged with the "romantic." This was not the first adventure of his life by many, and Charlie Thane, his especial chum and chamber mate in Hare Court, Temple, was for ever telling him that one of those days he would find himself entangled in some captive princess' web, and disposed of beyond redemption.

But he was rich, and rich folks can bridge over the nastiest rapids in life's stream.

But however it was, he went on, marvelling at the desolation and neglect around him, until he came directly in front of the house itself.

It was early Georgian in style, with a pedimented portico of four columns.

The house was set on a low terrace, approached by three short flights of shallow stone steps.

Marching boldly up to the door, he happened to cast his eyes upward, and again saw one of the centre shutters open gently, a small white hand grasping it, and a pale face, set in a mass of dark hair, looking down directly at him.

Before he could speak a piece of paper, weighted with a piece of coal, fell at his feet.

Looking up again, after he had stooped and picked up the paper, it was to find the shutter closed.

Hastily freeing the paper from the coal and smoothing it out on his hand, he read, in a woman's scrawl:

"My father was shot this morning by an agent of the South American Brotherhood, to which he belonged, and which believed that he had betrayed it to the English Government. They seek, too, to destroy me, but I have locked and bolted myself in this room. As one who looks to me to be strong and brave, I intreat you to get me out of here. Be cautious, however, for there are four men about the place acting under the orders of the agent, who himself struck my father down. I am in the front middle room on the first floor. They seek my life because I have seen the murderer's face, and can recognise and denounce him.

"UNA H."

Crushing the note into his pocket, he darted up the steps.

Don't forget the competition on page 819.

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The heavy front door was wide open; right ahead of him stretched upwards a broad flight of stairs.

At the foot of these he paused a minute to listen; but all was silent as the grave.

Then he saw on his left, ajar, a green baize door, studded with gilt nails.

Something prompted him to push the door wide open, the act bringing him face to face with the victim referred to in the letter of Una H.

He was not by any means an old man, although his closely cropped hair and beard were snowy white.

He lay on his back on the ground between the window and a large library table.

A small blue mark on the left temple told the cause of death.

On the breast of his waistcoat, and partially concealed by his coat, was pinned a dirty piece of paper, on which was printed in rude ink characters:

"Leopold Heath, a spy in the service of the United States Government. Died August 17th, 1901. B. S. S."

Obviously if the daughter was to be saved from a similar fate, no time was to be lost.

The window looked out upon the back garden, and Charteris stepped towards it to take a rapid glance out through it.

Midway, a man's face peered in, saw the intruder, snatched a revolver from his pocket, and fired point blank at him.

The bullet must have been deviated from its course by being fired through glass, for though the aim was true, there was no result, save that Charteris felt the windage of the missile as it whizzed past his right ear.

Giving no time for another attempt, the young man turned and sprinted up the stairs in true 'varsity fashion.

For a moment, on gaining the first floor landing, he stood still, in doubt as to which was the middle front room.

The difficulty was settled without any movement on his part, for right by where he was standing a door opened from the inside and a young girl, with the key in her hand, issued hurriedly from the room and clutched him by the arm.

It was his injured member, and he winced with pain, till his face was almost the colour of her own.

"Oh! did I hurt you? You are wounded! I heard the shot!"

"No—no!" he assured her. "It is all right! Miss Una Heath, I presume! But there is no time for social courtesy, I have to think how I am going to get you out of this!"

"Look!—that man!—the one who killed my father! coming up the staircase!"

As indeed he was.

Charteris, bidding his fair companion to keep in the open doorway, raised his right foot and shot it out full in the face of the fellow as he gained the top stair.

With a yell that echoed through the house, the man crashed down the whole flight, rolled nearly the length of the stone-paved hall, and lay still.

Not staying to investigate the other's injuries, Charteris, taking the girl by the hand, passed, almost at a run, down the stairs, and out through the front door on to the terrace.

Here the pair were met by A. R. 1 without his helmet, his coat half torn from off his back and scratched and bruised of face.

"Ah! I'm a bit too late, I see! Been having rather a rough time of it among the bushes yonder, but I've settled my gentleman, I fancy. Anyway, I've got the cuffs on him, and he'll have to explain things, I'm thinking, to-morrow morning at Lambeth."

"You've got one of them, then?" cried Charteris, gleefully. "I've changed my opinion about you, policeman."

"Didn't know you had one, sir; but thank you all the same."

"Well, never mind about that, what I want you to do is to get outside as soon as you can and see if my motor is usable."

"Your motor, sir! why it's gone to the station!"

"What! locked up? Well, send someone to bring it up—quick—I know what's wrong with it. A spanner and a screwdriver will put things straight again. But hark! What's that?"

"Sounds like a motor, sir!"

It is a motor! My motor! Come on!—Miss Heath!—forgive me! but we shall have to lift you over the fence, for the rascals either have the key of the gate or have thrown it away."

"I don't mind!" she said. "But what about my poor father's body?"

"I will see that all is done which should be done in that matter. Trust me! You will, will you not?"

"Trust you, yes—Mr. ——"

"Charteris. Hugh Charteris, at your service! Now, please! Constable, you get over first, and I will hand this young lady to you!"

In less than five minutes the three were in the lane to see and to hear the sometime disabled motor car, now restored and in its right mind, and ready for the road again.

In the driver's seat was Charlie Thane, who told his friend how the Inspector, finding Charteris' card case on the floor of the car, wired to Hare Court.

He, Thane, came on the instant; soon repaired the damage, and reached the scene of action in the very nick of time.

"Constable, get a day off and come to Hare Court to-morrow I shall have something for you—there's my card. Miss Heath, if you will let me drive you to my mother's at Sydenham, she will be only too pleased to look after you."

This was only the beginning of the end, for Hare Court saw very little of Hugh Charteris during the days that Una Heath stayed with Lady Charteris at Sydenham.

It was impossible but that these two, brought together so strangely, should, both of them, learn to love.

Some day, Una says, "she will tell the man to whom she has given her whole heart, the story of her father's life, and why it was that he elected to live in so secret a fashion."

Meanwhile they are both of them very happy, for the memory of a terrible time is rapidly softening away.

* * * * *

A. R. 1 duly received a substantial reward from Charteris, and had, moreover, the satisfaction of hearing a long sentence of penal servitude pronounced upon the captive of his own bow and spear. As to the man who had shot Leopold Heath, United States' spy, and Una's father, when the police, in force entered the place, they had no difficulty in securing him, as he was in an unconscious condition.

In due course, on Una's evidence, his life paid the penalty for his crime. The remaining two of the gang were found later on concealed in the shrubbery.

Ralph Enderby.

No Need Now.

"Do you pray for your husband?" asked the minister of Mrs. Biff. "I don't need to," replied she, "I've got him."

Why, Indeed?

"But you certainly ought to consider the wishes of your parents." "Why should I? They didn't marry to please me."

Ambition.

"I'd like to be rich," said Tommy. "How rich?" asked his sister. "Oh," replied the young man, after some thought, 'rich enough to wear my Sunday clothes every day."

Nothing Between Them.

He: "Is there much between George and Hilda?" She: "I saw them sitting on the sofa last evening, and you couldn't have put a knife between them."

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YOU CAN BEGIN TO-DAY.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

Author of "Fettered Lives," "As a Man Sows," "In the Grip of the Law," etc.

For New Readers.

A BELT full of diamonds has been stolen from a safe belonging to Mr. Mansfield, a wealthy banker, by Seaton Revelle (who is a friend of the banker's) and an accomplice named Benjamin Beard. Revelle accuses Alec Scarsdale, who is in love with Esther, Mr. Mansfield's daughter, of the crime, and he is sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude. Mr. Crump, late Chief-Inspector at Scotland Yard, feeling sure Scarsdale is innocent and Revelle is guilty, sets himself to prove the latter's guilt. Mr. Mansfield as fully believes in Scarsdale's guilt as does Esther in his innocence, and his friendship for Revelle increases. Revelle constantly visits the banker's house in an endeavour to win Esther's love, but so far has not prospered at all. While talking with the girl one day, Mr. Mansfield's new maid, Vance, enters the room with a tray bearing cups of coffee. No sooner does she catch sight of Revelle than she drops the tray, and, pointing to Revelle, screams: "That—that man is *my* husband!" But Revelle, by sheer force of will, compels her to acknowledge her mistake. In the meanwhile, Scarsdale, who has got into trouble for attacking a warder who jested with him about Esther, is taken seriously ill, and placed in the prison hospital. At about this time Esther and Mr. Crump are walking together when they observe Vance about to throw herself into a reservoir. Crump stops her just in time—he and Esther taking her back to the Woodlands. Later on Revelle and Benny drive up in a dogcart, and suddenly, while talking to Esther, Revelle turns deadly pale. Crump is standing by, and quickly sees the reason for his emotion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I Would not Harm this Gentleman's Reputation."

BENNY BEARD'S whole attention was centred on the cob's ears; for he looked upon them as a kind of barometer. When they dropped it was generally a forewarning that the animal would rise up on its hind legs, or indulge in some kind of unpleasant antic that would necessitate holding on. He did not see the grey shadow steal across Revelle's face, nor the reason.

But "Mr. Penworthy" was no longer scrutinising his note-book. Had Benny realised the real identity of the unassuming little man with the note-book, he would probably have experienced an anxiety greater even than that with which the cob inspired him.

Esther turned, saw what Crump had seen, and understood the reason of the grey shadow that darkened Seaton Revelle's face.

Vance, looking like, and moving like a ghost, was gliding towards them. Mrs. Tilley, in whose charge she had been left, was panting after her. She caught her up before she could reach the gates, and, taking her arm, spoke to her coaxingly and in a low voice, but Vance freed herself and glided on, her spiritless eyes fastened on Revelle.

Crump's eyes—small, but wonderfully comprehensive eyes—flashed from one face to the other, from the seeming gentleman to the plainly, neatly-dressed maid-servant, who moved and looked like an automaton. To a casual onlooker the scene would have presented nothing out of the commonplace, but to the little man it was essentially dramatic. It was in reality a breathless moment. The atmosphere seemed quiet enough, but it was highly charged. A bolt from the blue might be expected at any second now.

Revelle's hands tightened on the reins. His mouth assumed a curious, set look, and he fastened his eyes steadily, fixedly, on the figure moving towards him. Of those present, two only realised how great was the strain upon him—himself and Crump!

Vance dropped her eyes, and came to a standstill beside Esther.

"Vance," said Esther in a low, gentle voice, "you must go back to the house!"

"Yes, miss, yes, miss! But I saw this gentleman"—she raised her head and turned her face towards Seaton Revelle, but did not meet his eyes—"and I have come to say again that it was a mistake, last night. I am so sorry. I would not harm this gentleman's reputation for worlds. It was a mistake. I ask your pardon, sir!"

It took a great deal to make Crump hold his breath, but he had been doing so. He was breathing normally again now. It was as if a coin had been spinning in the air, but i had fallen now, and Crump was telling himself that Seaton Revelle had won the toss.

Revelle bent forward.

"My good woman, please say no more about it!"

For one moment Vance raised her eyes. They dilated as they met his, then she dropped them, and, turning on her heels, suffered Mrs. Tilley to lead her back to the house!

Benny Beard was all eyes and ears now. Revelle had told him of the episode of the evening before, making light of it, at the same time pointing out that, but for the woman's subsequent denial and admission of her mistake, it might have been deucedly awkward.

"By Jove!" thought Benny, "but when the Marquis sets his mouth like that it's a sure sign that something's very much the matter. The woman spoke as if he had mesmerised her. He always was a hot 'un, the Marquis. I wonder if he was telling me the truth this morning. Lord! but I hope we are not in for any complications!"

And Benny, who was cast in a weaker mould than the iron-nerved man beside him, was conscious of a decided qualm of uneasiness.

The rather strained silence that followed was broken by Revelle.

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"Miss Mansfield," he said, "this is awfully painful. Poor woman, I'm sincerely sorry for her!"

"She ought not to have been allowed out of the house," answered Esther in a low voice, "if you will excuse me, Mr. Revelle, I will go and see to her!"

Revelle raised his hat. Esther moved away to the house.

"Morning, Penworthy!" cried Revelle, lightly touching the cob with the whip.

"Good morning to you, sir!" responded Mr. Penworthy, deferentially raising his hat; then to himself as the trap rattled away, "a pretty pair of rascals, indeed; but the Prince of Darkness, they say, is entitled to his dues, and I must admit that Mr. Revelle displayed a most masterly self-control in a most nerve-trying situation. Phew! For a moment I thought that there was going to be some direct reference to Jim! Of course, I may be utterly wrong, and it's a conclusion on my part, but I have very strong suspicions on the subject of Jim's identity. Poor woman, poor woman! Absolutely cowed! Out of her reason and haunted by an unreasoning dread that in some way or other she may betray Jim. No, I don't think Jim was drowned. But I'm glad that there was no startling *denouement*. It would have been premature. I am hoping that, given rope enough, those rascals will hang themselves. We want proof, complete proof, of Alec Scarsdale's innocence. Mr. Revelle is living in pretty style at The Firs. A place like that wants a lot of keeping up. Well, we shall see what we shall see!"

Crump shut up his note-book with a snap, and sighed. Then, dismissing what was evidently a sad thought, he gave a little chuckle.

"Ah, Mr. Revelle, you're not the first man who has made a big mistake in estimating a woman. Yes, yes, yes! And you are coolly telling yourself—I like your infernal impertinence—that Miss Mansfield is gradually forgetting Alec Scarsdale, and that there is no reason why you should not step into his shoes. Very nice, indeed! A rich banker's only child! Go on, my dear sir, in that belief. I wish for nothing more than that at present! Go on, my dear sir, telling yourself that you are on the road to success!"

Again the little man chuckled.

"I am very pleased indeed with her—God bless her! She has a very hard part to play, and she is playing it gamely, bravely! Ah, dear me! I wish I could look upon these things more from an impersonal point of view; that should be the attitude of your true detective; but unfortunately I can't, and that's why I'm so afraid of making a mess of this business. So much human happiness depends upon it, and if only I could treat it impersonally I should do better. As it is I am over-anxious, I'm liable to be in too much of a hurry. I do so want to put an end to her suffering. I shall have to watch myself very carefully. I must preach to myself what I am always preaching to her—the gospel of patience. Dear me! The older I get, the worse I get. My dear fellow, *do* bear in mind that admirable proverb, 'The more haste the less speed!'"

It was testimony this, to the kindliness of the little man's heart. The heartache that Esther was bravely masking from the world, he realised, and it caused him keen pain. Over a quarter of a century's active detective work had not hardened him in the slightest.

A moment later, the gardener having joined him, he was engaged in very earnestly explaining a design of his for a flower-bed, and a scheme of colour that he fancied would be most effective.

"She was too quick for me, miss!" Mrs. Tilley was explaining to Esther. "The doctor said she might go out so long as someone was with her, and I thought perhaps a little walk would do her good; and then she caught sight of Mr. Revelle in his dog-cart, and glided off before I could stop her. Poor thing, goodness knows, I don't want her to be shut up, but I shall be thankful, miss, when my responsibility is at an end. Peters and Allen are with her now. She's just sitting quiet and talking to herself about Jim—I suppose he was her husband that was. Drowned at sea from what she says, poor thing!"

Esther sighed. The grim happenings of that early morning had affected her deeply, had told on her nerves. She went to the room where Vance was now, two maid-servants with her. Vance looked at her for a moment dully as though she were a stranger. Then her eyes lighted up a little.

"Can I do anything for you, Vance?"

"No, miss, thank you,"—she recognised her now—"but don't let him break your heart as he broke——"

She stopped abruptly. A shadowy look of cunning stole over her face.

"I say things, and I don't know what I'm saying. I was thinking you were someone else, miss, and I wasn't myself!"

She laughed vacantly; then, clasping her hands together, started to rock to and fro, crooning out in a tuneless voice—

"Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon!
Flying up sky-high, boys!
Trying to reach the moon!"

It was indescribably uncanny. When Esther reached her own room she was shivering. Was it possible that the man whom she forced herself to treat outwardly as a friend was responsible for this? How horrible! Her hands twitched nervously. Or was she allowing her imagination to run away with her?

Almost mechanically she drew out the envelope that Crump had given her and opened it. What was it that Tom Jackson—faithful Tom Jackson—had sent her?

Ah, a letter!

Then she caught sight of the handwriting. A low cry burst from her lips. *His* writing! Her eyes dimmed with blinding tears. It was all but twelve months since she had received a letter from him—the letter scrawled in the police cell!

Hungrily she read the letter. It was addressed to Tom Jackson. It was formal, almost cold. She realised why, but her heart ached with an unsatisfied feeling. It told her so little about him. He thanked Jackson for his letter. He wrote that he was feeling well and strong. She caught her breath with a little choking sound. Her name was not there, yet, in spite of that, he had contrived to send her a message.

"Please give my love to the one other person besides yourself who, thank God, still believes in me!"

Knowing that every word would be read by the prison authorities, that was all that Alec Scarsdale could trust himself to write. His love was too sacred a thing to be laid bare for others to read.

Esther pressed the paper feverishly to her lips. She understood, but an unsatisfied craving for something more filled her heart.

She sank down on her knees and prayed for the man she loved, prayed that God might give him strength to bear it all! Then she rose and placed the paper very near to her heart.

"'To the one other person besides yourself!'" she whispered softly. He did not know that there were others now, knew nothing of the kindly little man and the other young constable who were enlisted on his side and were fighting for him. And Esther told herself that she had much to be thankful for. Since her return she had only seen Tom Jackson once. He had been on duty at the time. His honest countenance had flushed under his helmet as he had saluted her, and stammered out that he hoped he saw her well. She must find opportunity to see him and thank him. She silently thanked God for these friends who helped to make her loneliness bearable, who were unselfishly working for the man she loved.

Meantime, the dog-cart, bearing Revelle and Benny, was rattling along at a spanking pace towards Lord Normanhurst's magnificent place, The Towers.

"Marquis," Benny was whispering a little uneasily, "she was—is a complete stranger to you? It *was* a mistake?"

He watched Revelle out of the corners of his eyes.

"Never set eyes on her before the other night!" answered Revelle, his eyes fixed ahead, and his hands working with the strain of keeping the cob in hand. "She's clean out of her mind. She's to be taken to the County Asylum this afternoon. It might have been deuced awkward, but both

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Mansfield and Esther had the sense to see that it was an obvious mistake. Let's drop the subject!"

Benny clutched hold of his seat and held on.

"For mercy's sake, Marquis, take it more gently round the turns!"

The dogcart had cut a corner very finely and dashed between great gates into a magnificent park. In the distance a castellated building was just visible—The Towers.

"Mansfield and Esther," said Revelle, "are going to dine with me at The Firs some time—they've promised me. It would be rather nice if I could get Normanhurst and Lady Normanhurst to come too. The night of the concert would probably suit all parties best. We could have a quiet little dinner first, and then all go on to the schoolroom for the concert afterwards"—he threw back his head and laughed—"I'm awfully looking forward to your comic songs, Benny. You will make a big hit!"

Benny looked a little uncomfortable. It was all very well for the Marquis—he possessed style—hobnobbing with the swells, but he himself was not so much at home in their presence.

"Marquis, you're playing a daring game!"

"It's worth it, and I'm playing to win, too!"

He pointed to The Towers with his whip.

"That's the next place down on my list. My fellow, Railton, is already on very good terms with Normanhurst's butler, and is making himself familiar with the interior. No immediate hurry, Benny, but it will have to be sooner or later. I've been spending money pretty freely lately, and funds won't hold out for ever. And——"

He paused. He was thinking of Esther now. Benny realised.

"Marquis," he whispered, pointing to The Towers, "it's a daring, dangerous game, that! I wish to Heaven that we could stop where we are, without running further risk, but if you've made up your mind, I shall be in with you; but I wish you'd chuck that idea of yours about the banker's daughter; let her alone. I don't believe she's forgotten him. Somehow I feel that she's playing a game with you! And I'm—well, I'm awfully sorry for her, and every time I see her I feel a brute!"

Revelle shrugged his shoulders.

"Benny," he said quietly, "I'm open to make a bet with you!"

"What's the wager?"

Revelle did not answer for a moment. A pale, lifeless face had suddenly intruded itself into his thoughts. But his hesitation was only momentary. He would make his bet, nevertheless.

"I'll lay you an even twenty pounds, Benny, that before the next twelve months are out Esther Mansfield will have promised to marry me!"

"Done," answered Benny, "and, Marquis, that twenty pounds are as good as in my pocket now!"

"You think so?" said Revelle.

Then he smiled and showed his white teeth.

And only a little while before Crump had been saying to himself:

"Go on, my dear sir, in that belief; I wish for nothing more than that at present! Go on, my dear sir, telling yourself that you are on the road to success!"

There was a brief silence, then Revelle spoke again.

"I wish to goodness that I hadn't let myself in for this balloon business. It's going to involve an enormous amount of trouble! By the way, Lady Eliza—she's a lady in her own right, don't you know, Benny—has most magnificent diamonds! If she dines with us you'll probably get some idea of their beauty and value—that is, if she wears the genuine articles. She's got a complete duplicate set in paste, and it's deuced difficult to distinguish between them. Between ourselves, the genuine articles have been in pawn before now, while her ladyship has apparently been wearing them. She's frightfully extravagant, and it takes Normanhurst all his time to make both ends meet—big place to keep up, and so on, and rents down!"

"Very interesting, Marquis," said Benny, "you're as good as a 'Burke's Peerage,' but how does this all apply?"

Revelle laughed,

"Well, Lady Eliza's diamonds are heavily insured, and the hard-uppishness at The Towers is generally known. And if, one day, the diamonds were stolen, it wouldn't be surprising if Lady Eliza were suspected of having had a hand in it herself. That sort of thing has happened before now, you know!"

"You're a deep 'un, Marquis!"

"Of course, it will want a lot of careful thinking out, and a little leading up to; but I can't help thinking it's rather a brilliant idea!"

A few moments later Revelle reined up in front of The Towers.

Two footmen opened the door. A pompous butler hovered in the background. A groom appeared magically and went to the cob's head.

Benny followed Revelle into the hall. He was feeling uncomfortable, but having seen Revelle hand his hat and gloves to one of the footmen, he did the same, and tried to look easy and at home. The way in which the footman glanced at his hat disquieted him.

"It only cost three-and-a-tanner!" he said to himself, "and I reckon Plush-breeches guessed as much from the look he gave it. Hobnobbing with lords and ladies is all very well for the Marquis, but it's a cut above me. Wish to goodness I was well out of it!"

The pompous butler ushered them into a great, oak-panelled room, the windows of which commanded a magnificent view.

Away in the distance, on the horizon, standing on an elevation, and peeping out from among trees, a grey-looking building was just visible.

"What's that place?" said Benny, as he inwardly wondered whether he ought to shake hands with, or only bow to Lord Normanhurst when he appeared.

"Bothered if I know!" answered Revelle.

As a matter of fact it was the County lunatic asylum!

That afternoon, in a closed cab, and in charge of two women in uniform, Vance, late of Mr. Mansfield's household, was taken there.

CHAPTER XIX.

How Scarsdale Succeeded in Writing a Letter to Esther.

"HERE, laddie, quick! Collar hold of 'em; slip 'em under yer blankets afore the screw comes along; write yer brief as best yer can, and then give it to me!"

Ben Needham, the convict nurse, under the pretence of arranging Scarsdale's bedding, had managed to slip into his hand a slip of paper, a crumpled envelope, and the stump of a pencil. Scarsdale's eyes lit up with a grateful light. There was no opportunity to thank him then, for the warder who paced the floor had turned and was moving back towards them. It was Scarsdale's last day in the ward. On the morrow he was to go back to labour and to the cells. Those days had only been a temporary reprieve. The degradation of the parti-coloured dress and the leg-chains still awaited him.

The chance of writing a letter to Esther had come at last. He lay there, his heart throbbing fiercely as he clutched the precious treasures beneath the coverlet—an inch of pencil, a dirty strip of paper, a crumpled, thumb-marked envelope; but, to a convict, treasures worth more than their weight in gold.

But with lynx-eyed warders moving around, it would be no easy matter to write, and he fidgeted uneasily in his bed. It was his last chance, too. To-morrow—ah, but he would not think of that now.

Cautiously he flattened out the strip of paper under the coverlet so as not to lose a moment when the opportunity came.

"Cynthia's Confessions" grow more astounding each week.

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Again Needham drew near to the bed.

"Laddie," he whispered, with motionless lips, "stand by to write. Turn over on your side, and you'll have less chance of bein' spotted. I've given the champion kidder the tip, and in a minute or two something 'ill happen as 'ill occupy the attention of the screws. Don't you take no notice, but go on writin' for all you're worth!"

Two warders were on duty, one sitting at a table at the end of the ward; the other patrolling to and fro.

Scarsdale glanced down along the row of beds, with their strangely contrasted occupants, and wondered what it was that was going to happen. He did not have to wait long before his curiosity was satisfied.

A moment later, from the far end of the ward, rang out a wild yell, suggestive of excruciating pain.

In an instant both the warders and a number of the convict nurses were hurrying across the ward towards the bed from which the startling cries had come, but before they could reach it the occupant had sprung to his feet with a yell, and, flinging himself on to the floor, proceeded to writhe and struggle in a series of spasmodic convulsions. It was hard to believe, even though he had been forewarned, that the man's suffering was only assumed, and Scarsdale, for a moment forgetting the letter, could not take his eyes from off the struggling figure. Then, remembering that every second was precious, he turned over on to his side, his back turned towards the commotion, and began to scrawl in feverish haste a pencilled message. Every eye was fastened on the man who was still desperately struggling on the floor. The warders were fully occupied in holding him down until the doctor should arrive. Scarsdale was unobserved. The conditions were not favourable to writing. His position was cramped, the paper thin, and more than once the pencil penetrated through. He had a thousand things to write, and yet he knew how brief his time was.

"My own love," he scrawled. his heart fiercely pulsing as he pencilled the words, "day and night you are in my thoughts. The memory of your love lightens the darkness. I still hope—I wait and hope. Prison shall not kill my love. Esther, Esther, my own dear love. God bless you and keep you from harm! The bearer of this letter has been a kind friend to me. He will find means to see you and give you messages that I cannot write. If you do not hear from me through Tom for some time, do not be anxious. My privilege of writing is suspended for the present. I am well and strong. Oh, God! If I could only see you—if I could only hear your voice! No, I am not despairing. My love, my love, let us wait and hope!—ALEC."

There was no time to think of nicely-turned phrases; he had written down his fevered thoughts, and the scrawled words seemed to reflect his unselfish nature. He would have her believe that he was well and strong and full of hope. He would keep from her all knowledge of those frightful hours of darkness and despair, of the utter hopelessness that sometimes prevailed and threatened to trample out what buoyancy of nature was left to him.

Thrusting the letter into the envelope that Ben Needham had provided for him, Scarsdale had barely time to write Esther's address upon it before the hurried entrance of the prison-doctor brought to an end the paroxysms of the convict patient who had so successfully diverted general attention. The man was an old and experienced "lag," and knew perfectly well that a doctor is not so easily deceived, and is always on the look-out for cases of shamming and malingering among prisoners, consequently he ceased his convulsions, and, displaying all the symptoms of utter prostration, suffered himself to be placed in his bed again. And even the doctor could not definitely make up his mind whether it had been a case of an epileptic seizure or only of shamming. The ward quickly resumed its ordinary appearance, and Scarsdale, clutching the letter beneath the bedclothes, waited for an opportunity to deliver it to Ben Needham. It was some time before Needham approached the bed. When, he did so he cast one quick, stealthy glance down the ward; then the letter passed into his hand, and, with a cleverness that would have done credit to a conjurer, he slipped it up his sleeve. He

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moved away again, and Scarsdale gave a great sigh of thankfulness, though even now his doubts were not yet at rest. It was one thing to have written and passed the letter to Needham, it was another for Needham to convey it beyond the barrier of the prison-walls. But the very act of writing the letter, and the hope that it might ultimately reach its destination, had cheered Scarsdale and gave him comfort. What seems trivial and most unimportant to us who lead an every-day life, assumes a different proportion to the man hemmed about by prison-walls and yet more isolating prison regulations.

When Ben Needham again approached the bed it was to wish Scarsdale good-bye. After that night they were not likely to meet again. On the morrow Scarsdale was going back to the cells; only a few days now stood between Needham and his liberty.

"Laddie," whispered the convict-nurse, his rough, scarred features twitching a little, "don't you worrit yourself about that brief; I shall git it through right enough, or my name ain't Ben. I've had a look at the address, I shall give it to the lady myself. Any messages, laddie?"

The ex-burglar, the man who had been bred and born in an atmosphere of crime, but in whose heart the spark of goodness still burnt, felt his eyes grow dim as he saw the blood ebb and flow on the young, haggard face.

"You can trust me," he went on, "I'm a'most old enough to be your father, laddie, and if them messages is a bit sentimental, you needn't think I shall be smiling at yer, laddie. I wasn't always so old as I am now. The first time I went to quod—it was five stretch—I left a sweetheart behind me. That's thirty year ago—they transported yer then, and I was shipped to Gibraltar—and I ain't forgot my feelings yet!"

"Tell her first," whispered Alec Scarsdale, almost inaudibly, "that I love her!"

"Aye, laddie," said the convict huskily.

"And tell her then that I am well and strong, and hopeful!"

Ben Needham nodded his head.

"And tell her then that the knowledge that she believes me innocent is—is life to me!"

The prison ward had not yet been lighted. A gathering shadow had fallen across the bed. The darkness had favoured the conversation. Ben Needham cleared his throat with a little cough.

"I'll give them messages," he murmured. "as you spoke 'em. I shan't forgit; the words is cut clean into my heart!"

"And then tell her that I believe that truth will out in the end; that the man who has made me suffer will be brought, sooner or later, to justice. And tell her when she sees Tom—she will know who I mean when you speak of Tom—that I thank him from the bottom of my heart for all he has done. For I know that he is working for me!"

"Aye, laddie!"

"And that's all. Only, if she questions you, don't let her know what a fearful life one leads here, Needham. Smooth it over; tell her that it's more comfortable than people think; that the things one reads about in papers and stories are written for sensation; that prison life is not so bad as it's painted—I would not have her know the truth."

"You can trust me to do that for you."

Ben Needham moved away from the bed. One of the warders had taken it into his head to perambulate the ward. When Needham again returned to the bed it was so dark that he could barely distinguish the outline of Scarsdale's features.

"Laddie," he whispered, in a voice hoarse with emotion, "quick, before they light up, give us a grip of your hand, I shan't see you again after to-night. But I shall see her, and I'll give them messages. Don't give in, laddie, and keep up a stout heart!"

The two hands met in a strong grip.

"Thank you, Needham, thank you for all you've done. I can only thank you!"

"Here comes the screw," was the hoarse reply; "laddie, good-bye!"

Then the warder's voice rang out, ordering those convicts on duty to fall in and file up. The ward was lit up now. As Scarsdale watched Ben Needham march out with the rest, a great feeling of loneliness came over him. During his time in prison he had made but two friends, Gentleman Jack and Needham, only to lose them both. If he envied he did not grudge them their freedom. Faults he had in plenty, but selfishness was not to be numbered among them.

Next morning, after his breakfast, two warders marched to Scarsdale's bed, and he was ordered to dress himself. The short respite was over. When he had donned the hideous, parti-coloured dress, and the doctor had signed a formal document discharging him from the hospital, he was marched to the chain-room, or, as it is called by the prisoners, "the jeweller's shop." Here the ignominy that had only been postponed was carried out. The leg-chains were riveted to his limbs. He was not permitted to labour that day, but was taken to his new cell, situated in the strongest part of the prison. When a prisoner is considered a dangerous character it is customary to continually change his quarters, and thus minimise the possibilities of escape. Before entering it he was strictly searched. When, in the course of the day, he was taken out to exercise, a warder accompanied him from the cell to the parade-ground. Here he took his place among convicts fettered like himself, and wearing either the black and yellow or black and drab dresses. There was no chance of conversation. They walked in single file, the only sound the metallic jangling of fetters. Round and round the parade-ground they wearily tramped, a grey, dull sky overhead and frowning walls and barred windows on every side—nothing to break the awful monotony. Then back again, some to labour at oakum picking, but Alec Scarsdale to his cell. Every hour the door was flung open, and the warder on duty inspected the cell. And when night came it brought no rest. The fetters chafed his limbs, and every time he turned on the hard bed, emitted a dismal, clanking sound. Twice during the night, when he had almost dozed off into a restless sleep, a lamp was thrust under the aperture at the bottom of the cell door, completely illuminating the cell, and a warder glanced through the spy-hole to see that all was right. Scarsdale was experiencing what was meant by "special orders." And he had been sentenced to six months "special orders." And it meant the postponing of all chance of escape for six months.

Escape! The thought was always with him. It had almost become a form of mono-mania!

CHAPTER XX.

How Seaton Revelle Manœuvred to be Alone with Esther.

"Well, Tom, well, Freddie, you young rascals, have you any news for me?"

The two young constables, both in mufti, and both looking as if they had devoted special attention to their personal appearance, were seated in "Mr. Penworthy's" sitting-room at Woodbine Cottage. Crump was leaning back in an arm-chair, his trusty pipe between his teeth.

Tom Jackson glanced at Fred Wilton; Fred Wilton glanced back at his comrade.

"Go on, Tom!"

"Well," said Tom, "we've both of us got on speaking terms with Railton!"

Crump nodded his head approvingly.

"He took to nodding to us when he met us. Then we sort of began to exchange a few words."

"A very quiet, self-contained sort," said Fred, "but he explained to me that he finds it a bit lonely down here, and he's fond of quiet, respectable companionship. He's on friendly terms with Lord Normanhurst's butler, he told me, but The Towers is a long way off. And he invited me and Tom, any time we're off duty, to drop in and see him at The Firs. His master has no objection to him receiving friends, provided that they're respectable!"

Crump's eyes were twinkling. Fred winked at Tom. He was acquainted with his uncle's mannerisms.

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J. H. Schneller, 1412 Avon Street, La Cross, Wisconsin, writes: "Hypnotism truly revealed the secrets of life and the mysteries of nature. My own father could not have convinced me of its wonderful power if I had not actually tested it for myself. I consider a knowledge of it invaluable to those who wish to get the most out of life; to those who wish to achieve success and live up to the full measures of their possibilities."

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"And," said Crump, "you will do so, both of you, when occasion presents itself. Does he manifest any interest in your official duties?"

Tom winked at Fred.

"He asked one or two casual questions about our beats and times on and off!"

Again Crump nodded his head.

"Tom, Freddie," the little man laughed chaffingly at them, "my old friend Tomlinson takes you, if I'm not mistaken, for a couple of—excuse the slang—a couple of M U G S This is very satisfactory, if not complimentary, but, my dear lads, it is far better to be taken for a mug than to be one. Tomlinson, or Railton as he is now, is bent on pumping you. Let him pump, and let yourselves be pumped. You two lads have made a distinct step in the right direction. Good! I'm pleased with you both!"

"His master," said Tom, "has bought a lot of tickets for the concert to-night in the schoolroom. And Railton, knowing we're both off duty, has given each of us a ticket, and asked us to go with him. Miss Esther"—his face flushed a little—"is going to sing!"

A look of concern crossed Crump's face. For a moment he looked quite distressed.

"How very provoking!" he exclaimed. "But wait a minute, in what part of the room will you and Railton be sitting, do you know?"

Tom Jackson pulled out a ticket and glanced at it.

"The sixth row!"

"Ah, that's all right!" Crump heaved a great sigh of relief. "You see, Pollie, Mrs. Cobb's little grand-daughter, was most anxious to go to the concert as a great treat, and, well, I've persuaded her grandmother, and I'm going to take her into the gallery. That will be all right. I think I can trust myself to avoid Tomlinson. Anyhow, I'll risk it. Pollie's heart would be broken if anything happened to prevent her going to the concert. Freddie, you young rascal, what are you winking at!"

"Was I?" said Fred, a little confusedly.

"You were, sir!" said Crump, almost severely. "It is not so very long ago, sir, that I was taking you and your little sister to entertainments, and a pretty handful you both were to look after. And now I catch you winking disrespectfully at your old uncle. You haven't improved a bit!"

Then the little man chuckled and proceeded to give his young lieutenants certain confidential instructions which were listened to very earnestly.

"And now pack off, both of you, and don't be afraid to let Tomlinson continue to take you for M U G S. I'm pleased with you both!"

He paused for a moment.

"And, by the bye, Tom, you've seen Miss Mansfield since I gave her that letter?"

"Yes"—the honest face flushed again—"yes, and—well, I only wish I'd another to send to her!"

It was some quarter of an hour after the constable's departure that Crump, holding Pollie's hand (Pollie in her Sunday best), left the cottage for the village. His kindly face was beaming all over as he listened to the little child as she prattled excitedly about the coming concert. And when, in her eagerness to get there, she insisted on running, Crump was constrained to break into a trot, too!

There had been a most *récherché* dinner that evening at The Firs. Revelle's guests were Lord and Lady Eliza Normanhurst, John Mansfield, and Esther. At first Benny had been ill at ease, but as the champagne circulated he gained more confidence, and became quite conversational and amusing. He was, in fact, the funny man of the party, yet he was never quite at his ease. The presence of Esther Mansfield was somehow, in spite of the champagne, a strain on his nerves. It was only after dinner that John Mansfield pleaded a headache as an excuse for not going on with the others to the concert.

When the party reached the room, a schoolroom and an entertainment-room combined, Tom Jackson and Fred Wilton were already in their seats. The silent Railton was between them. There was a hushed whispering at the entrance of the distinguished party. The vicar advanced to meet them.

Then suddenly Tom Jackson flushed scarlet. As Esther passed along she had seen him. She nodded and smiled at him.

Right away at the back of the gallery sat Crump. Pollie was beside him. He was holding one of her little hands. It was quite hot and moist with excitement.

"Oh, I do wish they'd begin!" whispered the child.

"We shan't have long to wait now, Pollie!"

Then Crump leant forward a little, and saw Tom and Freddie below, and who was sitting between them. He chuckled softly. Then he glanced at the front row. Revelle was seated between Lady Eliza Normanhurst and Esther Mansfield. He was talking to Esther. He was behaving absolutely like a gentleman, but, perhaps, like Benny, the champagne had affected him a little.

"I am so awfully sorry," he was saying, "that your father was not feeling up to the mark—couldn't come on with us. I told him that I would be responsible for seeing you safely home!"

His dark eyes seemed a little brighter than usual. Esther, for all her pallor, was looking singularly pretty. She was dressed simply, but in exquisite style.

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Revelle," she answered, "but there will be no need to trouble you. The carriage will be here for me!"

"But I told your father not to bother to send the carriage. You see, my brougham will be here!"

Esther's expression did not change, but she felt the look of admiration that was shining from his eyes.

"But will you excuse me for a minute. I want to see Faversham before the concert starts. He's round at the back with the artistes. You're wiser, Miss Mansfield, and prefer a comfortable seat in the audience till your turn comes!"

Having apologised also to Lady Eliza Normanhurst, Revelle made his way round to the back, where he found Benny with the other performers. He took him on one side.

"Look here," he whispered, "after the concert make yourself scarce! Walk back to The Firs!"

Revelle meant to be alone with Esther Mansfield when he drove her home after the concert.

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By MADGE MORRIS.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

Silent Lovers.

"PRINCE" is rather a talkative young man, but when in the presence of his beloved finds it very difficult to speak at all for long periods. Whether it is that he has nothing to say, he doesn't know. What is he to do to remove this defect? Well, "PRINCE," I think you very likely make the common mistake amongst sweethearting couples in assuming that you must only talk about yourselves and your feelings when together, while when in other people's presence you would converse on general subjects. Perhaps the topic is easily exhausted so far as you both are concerned, hence your long silences.

❦❦❦

As a matter of fact your sweetheart should be one who opens your mind more than anyone else, and these silences rather suggest that you have not very much in common, or you would not find conversation so difficult. When next with her, try talking just as though she were an ordinary girl, and not your beloved, though there is no reason why you should not accompany your remarks with a squeeze, to show that you have not suddenly grown cold. I rather suspect that these silent love attachments have not very much solid basis, for those who are about to unite their lives should certainly have some interests in common besides themselves. Try talking on every subject you know anything about, and she must surely find something in which she is interested.

❦❦❦

Curiously enough, I know of two young people very devoted to each other, but the young man confessed to me candidly that, though deeply devoted to the girl, he could seldom talk on general subjects unless a third party were present, when he became suddenly brilliant. "PRINCE" might try the influence of the third person now and again, just to see if it is the case with him.

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The "Tyranny of Tears" Again.

"WILLIE" has been engaged six months, and has been constantly in his sweetheart's company. In fact, they have scarcely had one serious parting. However, he has now to go to America for three months, on important business. This his sweetheart says will break her heart, and every time she thinks of his departure she sheds tears. "WILLIE" is afraid she will make herself ill with fretting. Ought he to cancel the trip, even though doing so might injure his prospects?

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No, "WILLIE." You should not give up the trip, especially as you say it will advance your prospects. Your little girl's grief is very natural, but to encourage such conduct now would be a very serious mistake. You made the mistake in being too much with her since your engagement. You should have made several fairly long breaks in your meetings, in order to accustom her to your absence, and then your present departure would not have been felt so much. As it is, you must try and console her for your absence by letting her know how much it will benefit your position, and if you can get a friend of hers or a girl friend or relation of your own to look after her while you are away, it would be a good plan. But it would be very foolish to let mere sentimental considerations interfere with your prospects, and I think you will find she will soon reconcile herself to your temporary absence.

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Marriage Licenses.

AN ordinary marriage license, "RIGO," costs from £2 12s. 6d. to £3 3s. A special license allowing the marriage to take place in any church without either of the parties having previously resided in the parish costs something over £29.

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A Love Stealer.

I HAVE had two letters bearing in different ways on friendships between girls. "ADA" has known "MAUD" since childhood, and they have always been intimate friends. Recently "MAUD" met a very handsome and charming young man, who appeared to be in love with her. "ADA," however, suspects that he is really fonder of herself, though the knowledge of it would break "MAUD'S" heart, as she is desperately attached to the young man. How should "ADA" act?

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If "ADA" has any sense of the obligations of friendship she will not act at all. If she has been the intimate friend of "MAUD" since childhood she should banish altogether such a base thought as to try and steal her lover. She is quite possibly mistaken in her surmise that the man would like her better. She probably does not read his mind in the least. Girls often think they read men, but are in nine cases out of ten mistaken. If he is really fonder of "ADA" time will soon prove it. Meanwhile, her duty is to avoid all attempts or even thoughts of stealing her friend's lover.

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Prefers Her Girl Friend.

THE other letter tells me that "PERPLEXED" has been receiving attentions from a man for some time, but finds that she really prefers the society of a girl friend. She finds being made continual love to is nothing but a bore, and is much more partial to intimate conversations with those who are her mere friends. "PERPLEXED" would do very wrong to continue any such half-hearted attachment as that which exists between herself and this man.

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If she prefers her girl friend, she should cease receiving his attentions. It is only fair and honourable that she should do so. Give him up, "PERPLEXED," you evidently do not care very much for him. Perhaps later on the man will appear who will be to you both friend and lover. That is the sort of being for whom girls of your kind should seek.

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The Mischief-Maker Once More.

"HEARTBROKEN" writes to tell me that, through the mischief-making of a third person, he, some six months ago, separated from the girl whom he now finds he loves more than he ever imagined possible. Unhappily whenever he meets her she passes him in the most proud and cold manner, which "HEARTBROKEN" feels certain is only assumed. He wants to make it up. What shall he do? Well, the matter is quite a simple one. Just write and tell her that you would like to see her, and if she is a sensible girl she will again meet you, and you should be quite capable of managing the rest.

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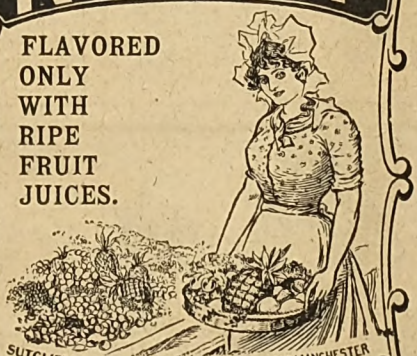

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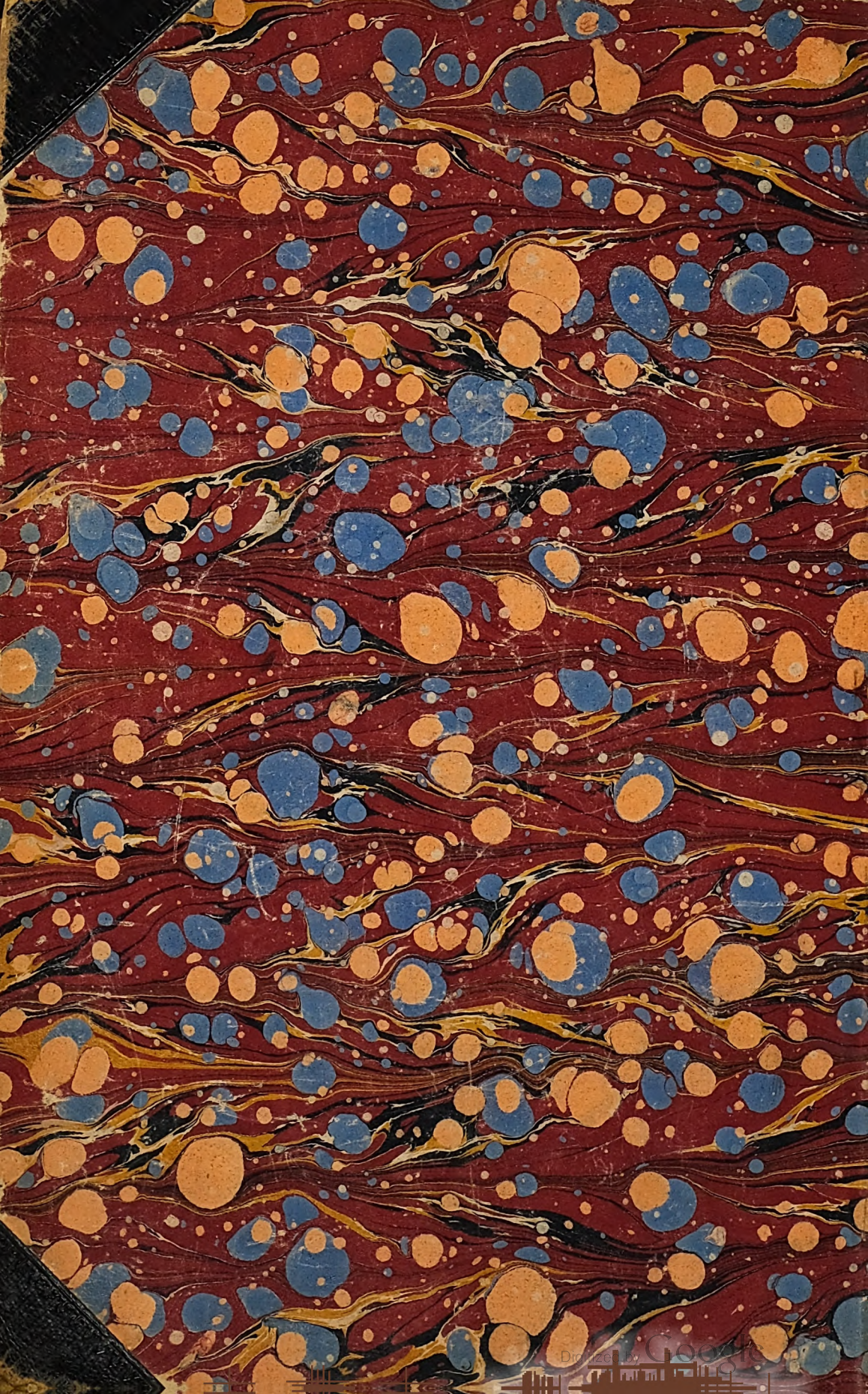
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